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THIRTY-FIFTH VOLUME.

THE LIFE OF MARY WARD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Mary Ward.

*Engraved from the original oilpainting in the Paradeiser Haus,
(the first Convent of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Munich,)
now in the possession of the Nuns of the Institute at Alttötting Bavaria.*

THE LIFE OF MARY WARD

(1585—1645)

BY

MARY CATHARINE ELIZABETH CHAMBERS

OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

EDITED

BY

HENRY JAMES COLERIDGE

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS



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INTRODUCTION.

A VOLUME like the present needs no apology, nor would the present introduction seem necessary, but for the colour which circumstances in which she had no part, and which occurred long after her death, have thrown over the name of Mary Ward. It is indeed a matter requiring explanation, that we should not possess in our language any Life of one who laboured so perseveringly for the good of her beloved country, in its darkest hours of religious revolution. The lives that have been written abroad have been exceedingly numerous, and they have been works on which the toil and zeal of men of the highest character and greatest research have been spent. The authentic documents concerning her which still exist are numerous, and most valuable. Indeed, it is to be feared that even the researches made by the author of this volume have failed to exhaust them. The great work which, in any case, and under any view of her personal character, must be allowed to have sprung from her exertions and those of her companions, has survived the fiercest storms

to which any such work can be exposed. It lives to this day, fruitful and prolific to an extent which places it among the brightest contemporary glories of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the character of the work which Mary attempted has a special interest in times like our own, in which Institutes hardly differing, in any essential respect, from that which was the object of her devoted zeal, have been multiplied very largely in the course of the great Catholic reaction which succeeded to the catastrophe of the French Revolution. No one can now question that her aims were lofty and wise. No one can doubt that what she attempted was in harmony with the truest Catholic spirit and doctrine. The fascination of her character was marvellous, and I trust that the pages of this volume will convince their readers that the enthusiasm and devotion which she received from those who spent their lives with her, who knew her the best, and whose loyalty to her was sorely tried by the storms which she had to brave, were no exaggerated and unfounded sentiments. The simplicity and nobility of her soul will be seen, I think, at every turn of the history.

The circumstances in which the Catholic Church in this country has been placed, from the change of religion almost down to the present day, may account in great measure for the absence in our

literature of any satisfactory lives of many whose labours for the faith have left large traces behind them. We are but just beginning to reckon up our spiritual riches. It is but natural that the first thing to be done, in the new air of freedom and vigour which we are allowed to breathe, should be, as it were, to collect the ashes and raise the trophies of our martyrs, to take cognisance of the details of their sufferings and of the witness which they rendered to the faith of Jesus Christ. Our first duty is to the sufferers unto death, to whom we owe our own inheritance and possession of the incomparable jewel of the faith. After the records of prison, and torture, and scaffold, and gibbet, come the bright and more joyous stories of those who have kept up the traditions of the highest life among English Catholics, and who in so many cases, by the wonderful Providence of God, were unconsciously the spiritual builders of many a holy home of prayer and praise and contemplation, by which the fair island which they thought they had abandoned for ever is now once more adorned, and being made still fairer in the sight of God and His angels.

It must undoubtedly be regarded as a great and noble witness to the vitality of the Catholic spirit in the oppressed and persecuted remnant that were faithful to the Creed of St. Augustine and the

See of St. Peter, that the religious traditions of the country should have been preserved in communities of Englishmen and Englishwomen, even when it was necessary for this that the members of such communities should leave the land of their birth and become exiles under the ban of the law. What we owe to the intercession for England of so many of her own sons and daughters, whom her rulers considered and treated as convicts and traitors, will never be known until the last day. It is a ground for hope for the future, amid the many discouragements of the days in which we live, that Providence should in so many cases have given us back the beauties and glories of the religious life, not from foreign institutions or foundations, but from the very communities of English birth which had kept up for us elsewhere those glories and beauties when they were proscribed at home.

The narrative of the Life of Mary Ward opens a new page in the history of the exertions and sufferings of Catholic children of our own soil for the maintenance and restoration of the faith which England had been permitted to forfeit. The great charm of the story lies, not only in the simple and beautiful character of Mary and her associates, but also in the gradual unfolding in their hearts of aspirations and aims of which they had but little

conception when they first started on their adventurous path. It is clear that the first idea which led so many noble and gentle ladies to seek freedom for the practice of their religion on foreign shores, was the simple desire to serve God in the religious state. The religious life in itself was to them the ideal of perfection and of happiness. They thought but little of the variety of vocations which flourish, as a number of fair plants, within that large and heavenly garden, and ever their spiritual guides seem to have thought in many cases that it was enough for a soul which desired to serve God in perfection to find its way into any religious institute whatsoever, there to put on the habit whether of choir-nun or lay-sister, whether of St. Austin, or St. Benedict, or St. Bernard, or St. Dominic, or St. Francis. They knew and thought but little of the possible difficulties to which a difference of nationality or even of constitution may give rise in any particular case. They knew that England had been the home of a score of great religious institutes. They knew that hundreds of their own ancestors had for many generations sent their children joyously to the houses of prayer and penance with which the land had been studded, and they suddenly found this great region of virtue and of pure communion with God closed against them by cruel and barbarous laws. They asked few questions as to what was the door at which they first knocked

on their arrival abroad. It was the door of a religious house and that was enough.

In many cases this venture of holy simplicity was the beginning of a life of quiet contented service of God. The exiles found what they sought, and were happy. But in many other cases this could not be so. There is an almost amusing naiveté—a naiveté which would be nothing but amusing, if it had not led to so much mental anguish—in the account given in this volume of the arrival of Mary Ward at the door of the College of the Society of Jesus at St. Omer, with a letter in her hand to one Father, of her falling into conversation with another Father, who happened to come to the door at the same moment, and of her being told off then and there as an out-sister among the Colettine Franciscanesses—her duties to be those of going round the town, day by day, to collect alms for the sustenance of the community. This reckless offhand disposal of so delicate a matter as a religious vocation, which was intended to last for a life time, and which was at once declared to be “the will of God,” was turned, in the case of Mary Ward, and probably of many another noble soul, to the great spiritual benefit of herself and others. But what if there were as many more, treated in the same way by thoughtless directors, who had not the humility, the faithfulness, the courage and spiritual strength

which carried Mary Ward safely through so cruel a trial?

The next step in the development of the religious life among English fugitives abroad was naturally the foundation of convents of various orders for the ladies of English birth exclusively. It is probable that in modern times the differences of national disposition and of national manners are less marked and important than in the days to which this narrative belongs. It is true that the religious bond between various nations is by no means so strong as in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. It is true that national antipathies and hatreds are more powerful now than ever in withering up the spiritual life of many and in dwarfing it in many more, till they almost rival in strength the hateful rancours of political partisanship, or the murderous enmities of class against class in the same community, which make us almost long for a new St. Bernardine to go through the land denouncing them as he of old denounced the Italian factions. These national feelings can sometimes lurk in religious hearts, faintly reflecting, even in communities professing the special love of God, the spirit which separated the Jews from the Samaritans. Still, the methods of education, the habits of daily life, and the prevailing customs in such apparently trivial matters as dress and food, are far more uniform now than

of old. Perhaps in the present century St. Teresa, a Castilian lady, would not find herself so much of a foreigner in Andalusia, and if a colony of her spiritual daughters were now transplanted into France from Spain they would be more at home than the famous little band which was brought to Paris by Madame Acarie. Yet even in our time it is no inconsiderable trial to live as foreigners and strangers, even in an atmosphere of perfect charity, and the difficulties which seem so petty at a distance, become very serious indeed in the case of hundreds of souls. The English ladies who in the seventeenth century went abroad for the sake of entering the religious life, found much difficulty in matters which were everyday concerns with the good Flemish or French communities to which they joined themselves. The result was most happy for their own country. For these difficulties contributed largely to the foundation of the separate convents for English religious, to which we owe our purest traditions of spiritual discipline in the present day.

The reader of the following pages will see the considerable part allotted by Providence to Mary Ward in this stage of the religious development of the English exiles. If her story had closed with her exertions in this direction, her life would have been more peaceful indeed than it was to be, but certainly also less fruitful. There was, however, a still

further step in the history—a step of danger and enterprise from which even the boldest hearts might well shrink, until, at least, they had convinced themselves of the clear will of God as the motive for their action. In this way also Mary was to work and to suffer. It was not quite enough to have prepared for so many souls, in whom the seed of the religious vocation would otherwise have been stifled, the holy homes abroad which were no longer accessible in their own country. The most solitary of recluses cannot draw near to her God in prayer, and enjoy the heavenly favours of His conversation, without being kindled with a most ardent love for souls and a most excruciating sorrow at their loss. Many such souls were then in the Church, many, no doubt, among the English ladies who had taken refuge in the convents abroad, who were on fire with the flame caught from the Sacred Heart itself, the flame by which the holiest servants of God are the most terribly tormented, and which drives them along the same path of self-sacrifice and immolation on account of the loss of souls, which was first trodden by the Feet which were nailed to the Cross on Cavalry. The state of England must have been the constant cause of the bitterest anguish to all her Catholic children, and most of all to those who loved God the best. It was impossible but they should cast about for some religious body in which, at any risk or cost to themselves, as far as their vocations

would permit of it, they might do some little thing at least to save the hundreds of Catholics whose faith was in danger, to prevent the religion of their forefathers from dying out, to preserve especially the young from the terrible snares from which it seemed there was no escape. In a state of society like that produced in England by the apostasy of the crown and court, and the violent measures by which the change of religion was forced on the unwilling people, it was inevitable that the work of preserving what remained and of reclaiming to the faith those who had yielded through weakness rather than from error, should have to be carried on in secrecy and at the cost of much danger. It was no time for open preaching. Communities could not be collected with any chance of safety. Most of the ordinary machinery of the Church in times of peace was out of gear, or, at least, was inadequate for the needs of souls. Society was in a condition which forced Catholics back on the methods used in the earliest ages of persecution. The faith must be maintained by personal intercourse and influence, by private conversations, by conferences in which the two parties hardly knew one another, by missionaries disguised as laymen, by ladies devoted to God, who appeared to the world in which they moved as children of its own. The persecutors first made it impossible for Catholics to fight for the faith openly and publicly, and then

accused them of deceit and treachery for fighting for it in any other way. The ingenuity of Christian charity was forced to adopt all methods that were justified by moral and natural laws for carrying on the holy apostolate, and it was loaded in consequence with opprobrium of every kind by the legitimate descendants of those who had called the Master of the House Beelzebub.

How was the charity of the ardent souls of the English exiles to find a vent in labour, systematic and organized, for the salvation of the numberless souls who were every day in greater danger of perishing eternally? This was a work, as has been said, beyond the simple provision of homes for ladies who might desire to serve God in the cloister, and devote their lives to prayer for the conversion of their beloved country. This work must be an active and an aggressive work, and it is quite in harmony with the vigour and manly energy, for which the English character was never more conspicuous than in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that women as well as men should be eager, and feel themselves inspired with zeal, to undertake it. We must not expect in such circumstances of times and persons, that every plan which was adopted for the great object in view should be at its very outset the product of the most mature and deliberate wisdom. It must not surprise us if the best and purest intentions

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did not always prove a perfect security against mistakes, if proposals which are in our own time accepted as most beneficial, were in that century suspicious on account of their novelty, if dangers were apprehended which we have learnt to disregard as, in a great measure, visionary, if enthusiasm on the one hand, and opposition on the other, were not always unaccompanied by passion, and if schemes were set aside by the prudence of authority as untried, which now receive the sanction of the same authority after their principles have been proved by experience. The unerring insight of the Church does not exempt her from the duty of caution, nor is it any argument that measures would have been wise and safe in the seventeenth century, that their safety and wisdom are recognized in the nineteenth.

The problem which must have occurred to many ardent minds among English Catholics at home and abroad at the time of which we are speaking in relation to the education of the young of both sexes, involved many questions of great delicacy, and it came upon them as one of a number of similar problems which were in a great measure new. We look back from the vantage ground of experience on the difficulties of those to whose labours and sufferings we owe it that the Catholic Church in England did not die out, and we are inclined to make light in our own minds of many questions which to them were

real perplexities. The duty of allegiance, the right of resistance, the lengths to which civil loyalty might go in opposition to the temporal interests of the Church, the obedience due to a persecuting state, and the like, were to them matters as to which there was by no means the clear light and certain guidance which we should now enjoy under similar circumstances. And it was the same with many practical matters of expediency and policy such as that of which we are speaking.

It could, indeed, hardly have been otherwise. The Church, even in the countries in which her empire was as yet unassailed, was in no ordinary state of peaceful possession in the times which succeeded the epoch of the revolt of Luther and the other reformers. No thoughtful student of her history will for a moment deny the great abuses which had crept over the age which followed on the great schism in the Papacy, or will suppose that the revolt of which we have just spoken had no serious cause in the state of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in all its grades, and of the religious Orders in too many countries. It is not possible to hide from ourselves that the great storm of the Reformation fell on a generation by no means free from corruptions and degeneracy. These evil influences were to be found in all countries and in all classes, here in the parochial clergy, there among the prelates, in one place in the cloister, in another among

the ecclesiastical princes, who seemed to the outward eye so little different in their lives, and in the courts by which they were surrounded, from their most secular neighbours. In this, as in all such trials, the Church showed herself to be the true bride of Christ, guided in her pilgrimage through the world by the Holy Ghost. She took the occasion of the calamities which befell her in so many countries of Europe, most of which have been to some extent permanently lost to her unity, to revive ancient fervour, to set right long established abuses, to introduce a stricter discipline into her cloisters, and to train her clergy with fresh care and watchfulness for the service of the altars of God. At the same time, she opened a new era, it may almost be said, to her theologians and doctors, by those grand definitions of the truths which had been assailed by Luther and the brood of heretics who followed him in his revolt, which were the work of the Fathers of Trent. Other glories make this epoch of the history of the Church as brilliant as any in her annals, and a whole cluster of great saints was vouchsafed to her, many of them the founders of new religious Institutes, which carry on to our own time the work and the spirit of their holy authors.

Thus the time of which we are speaking was a time of revival and vigour coming after one of comparative torpor and relaxation. The new order of

things in the world outside had been promptly understood by the Church, and she had as promptly grappled with the needs which it created. In doing this it was inevitable that she should in some measure modify her tactics and re-fashion the weapons with which she fought. At the same time that she enacted new rules of discipline for the clergy, and placed larger powers in the hands of her ecclesiastical rulers for this purpose, she created new Orders for works of active zeal which had become more imperative than before, and, while she reformed the homes of prayer, contemplation and penance, she also put forth fresh strength in the fields of education and corporal mercy. The Oratory of St. Philip Neri was a new idea for the organization of communities of the secular clergy. So was the Institute founded by St. Camillus of Lellis for the care of the sick. So was the Order of St. John of God, and such, in a pre-eminent degree, was the Society of Jesus, embracing in its scope the advancement of the greater glory of God in every possible manner, and especially in the great work of the education of the young. The new Institutes were received throughout the Church as a whole with wonderful enthusiasm, and soon gathered around themselves very devoted adherents and friends. They were most generously welcomed by the older Orders, by the most enlightened among the clergy, and by the most

distinguished prelates of the Church. Kings and nobles vied with one another in favouring and promoting them, and they had the most precious of all rewards in the devotion which they soon elicited among the masses of the Christian people.

In order to understand the history of the noble soul whose footsteps in life are followed in the pages of this work, it is necessary to take into account the peculiar character and history of the religious body to which her affections were attracted from her earliest years, and to many of whose members she was largely indebted throughout her life. It cannot be doubted that among the innovations which the Church so happily sanctioned in the period of which we are speaking, those which were involved in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus were not the least conspicuous. In many important respects, the Society embodied a new idea. It was new for religious men to have no distinctive habit, not to be bound to cloister, to be exempted from the rule of choir, to have no regular public austerities, and to be governed by a Superior elected for life. The course of time has shown the wisdom of the Pontiffs who saw in the work of St. Ignatius the Hand of God, and a whole swarm of modern congregations, both of men and women, have adopted, more or less, the very innovations which seemed in the sixteenth century to be so startling and so questionable. This is not the

place either to write the history of the Society, or to defend its constitution. A very little acquaintance with either is sufficient to prepare the reader of the following pages, for much which will seem very strange to those who do not possess that acquaintance. For generations after its first foundation the great successes of the Society were never unaccompanied by jealous criticisms on its organization—criticisms not always simply jealous and envious, nor always confined to the most narrow-minded and captious of its many enemies. It was always hated, with a hatred mixed with instinctive dread, by the foes of the Church, of her purest doctrine and loftiest morality, and the foes of these have always been found among those who profess to them the deepest devotion, as well as among avowed separatists from her pale. But it was always, also, looked upon with some fear and suspicion by good men, ill-informed as to its principles, and unable to understand the Divine wisdom of many of its apparent innovations. Time has abundantly justified both St. Ignatius, and the long succession of Roman Pontiffs, the first as to the scheme of which he was the author, the last as to the favour with which that scheme was welcomed by them. But at the time when Mary Ward and her companions lived, the Society was only completing the first century of its existence.

It would have been very wonderful if persons in

their position and with their aspirations and aims, had not seen in the Constitutions of the Society of St. Ignatius a plan of life and work for the glory of God which seemed entirely fitted for them. They saw the great facilities for the combination of the most perfect interior discipline with the utmost freedom that could be granted for dealing, under the very difficult circumstances of their time and country, with the souls whom they desired to save from heresy, schism, and worldliness. They saw an admirable scheme for the education of the young, working with immense success, and with a chorus of general applause, marred by no discordant voices except of those whose personal interests were interfered with by the gratuitous teaching of the Society. They saw great and conspicuous examples of holiness in men whose lives were extremely active, and who were always at the command of their neighbours whenever any spiritual or intellectual good was to be done. They saw all this in a system which had the highest sanction from authority, which attracted the noblest and most ardent spirits in search of a vocation in which to serve God and the Church with the utmost devotion, while at the same time it was admired and befriended by the most saintly prelates and rulers in Church and State alike.

It is true that St. Ignatius had never contemplated the application of his rule to religious women. But

the adaptation of new religious rules to women had usually followed on their foundation for men. Other Orders which had preceded that of St. Ignatius, and which had, in earlier generations, taken the first place in the battle-line of the Church, had, almost as by a necessity, opened their ranks to devoted souls of either sex. The glorious habits of St. Benedict, of Mount Carmel, of St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Austin, St. Bernard, and a score of others, were worn in hundreds of convents of women as well as monasteries of men. It might well seem to the ardent souls of whose labours we shall hear so much in the pages which follow, that the design of St. Ignatius was almost incomplete unless his rule were adapted, especially in times of such urgent need, to women who might follow in the footsteps of St. Scholastica, St. Clare, St. Elisabeth, or St. Catharine of Siena.

No doubt can be entertained, in the days in which we live, that such aspirations were perfectly reasonable and legitimate. Women desirous of consecrating themselves to the service of God have long been allowed to adopt the rule of life which was first introduced by St. Ignatius. If no order of religious women has ever been connected with the Society of Jesus in the same close manner as that which binds the daughters of St. Clare to the Order of St. Francis, or the Sisters of Penance to that of St. Dominic, it is not the less true that the congre-

gations of women who have adopted the plan of the Society are perhaps at this moment not less numerous and not less flourishing in the Church than those which follow any other rule whatsoever. Even those parts of the system of the Society which seemed most strange, when they were first introduced, and which were most strongly opposed, even for religious men, such as the freedom from inclosure, and from the obligation of choir, and, more than all, the government of the body by one head elected for life, have been conceded to more than one of the congregations of women which are now labouring fruitfully in the Church. Indeed, it could hardly have been otherwise. The modern needs of the Christian populations, especially in the matter of education, the far greater freedom of social intercourse which is now universally allowed, and, perhaps, to some extent, the greater facilities of communication either with a central authority in religious Orders themselves or with the Holy See, have been among the causes which have concurred to make that appear tolerable and desirable in the nineteenth century which in the sixteenth or seventeenth was novel and objectionable. But in considering the history of Mary Ward and her companions, it is necessary to remember that we are dealing with the Church as it was and with society as it was in the earlier period, instead of as they are in the later.

Looking back on the state of things in which these devoted women found themselves, it is in our eyes the most natural thing in the world, that they should have aimed at what they did aim at, even setting aside the deeply religious character of their whole lives and the reasons which they had for thinking that the work on which they wished to engage was the work of God. But it is equally true to say that it would have been almost a miracle, if the proposal to introduce at that time a congregation of women actively labouring for the cause of the faith and of education, after the exact pattern of the Society of Jesus, had not been received with strong hostility on the part of a large number of good men, and with much suspicion and hesitation on the part of the Holy See itself. The Council of Trent had lately made severe regulations about the inclosure of religious women, and these regulations had been made necessary by the very great licence which had prevailed in more than one country in Europe, to the infringement of discipline and the discredit of the religious state. The idea of active Orders of women was a new one in the Church, and even to the present day, there will be found in many Catholic countries of the south of Europe, a marked dislike to the combination in women of the religious character with the external life of charity and benevolence, which so many modern congregations follow

with so much benefit to the souls and bodies of their neighbours. The earliest attempts at an active life among women generally ended in the restriction which made them cloistered nuns. Such was the issue of the Congregation of the Ursulines, founded, about the same time with the beginnings of the great work of St. Ignatius, by St. Angela Merici. A most notable instance of the difficulty of any innovation on the usual rule as regards religious women is that of the glorious Order of the Visitation, the beginnings of which were made at the very time with the efforts of Mary Ward. St. Francis of Sales intended his spiritual daughters for some such work as that of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul. But he found himself obliged to abandon his purpose entirely. We still possess two beautiful letters, one from the Saint to Cardinal Bellarmine, the other the answer of the Cardinal to the Saint. St. Francis describes his Congregation as living under simple vows, and asks Bellarmine to assist him in obtaining the sanction of the Holy See to its erection into an Order. The religious were to adopt one of the rules already in existence, to be bound to inclosure, and to take solemn vows. But he begs for three mitigations of the usual conditions—that they might be allowed to recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin instead of the Divine Office, that they might be allowed to continue their practice of

having some pious widows living in their convents, and joining in the exercises of the Congregation, who were now and then, but very seldom, to leave the convents on matters of necessary business, and that they might also be allowed from time to time to receive into the house ladies who wished to spend some days in religious retirement. But Cardinal Bellarmine advises St. Francis to leave things as they are, inasmuch as it is certain that the Holy See will never grant the request on such conditions.

If uncloistered nuns were thus an anomaly, still less was it a favourite idea that a woman could be the religious superior of more than a single convent, of a body spread through a multitude of houses, or even of provinces, and could undertake the duty of visiting her subjects as well as of governing them by letter. It may truly be said that in any rapid adaptation of the system of the Society to women, there would have been much that might have been contrary to the Divine prudence by which the Church is grounded. It is not her wont to accept novelties without trial and to approve them without experience. Much more did such an adaptation involve many things altogether contrary to the prevalent ideas of the time about the duties of religious women, many things not only without precedent, but even uncongenial to received principles and traditions. It is the manner

of the Church to be jealous at first, of even what seem the most legitimate developments in the sphere of devotion, or again, of new revelations or sanctuaries, or places of pilgrimage, however apparently authenticated by signs as it were from Heaven. She knows that if the new thing be of God, it will force its way by His power, and that it is her duty to prove all things before she accepts them as true. It is no difficulty at all, to those who understand her spirit, that even the devotion to the Sacred Heart should at first have been checked by authority, and afterwards encouraged and fostered to the extent which we witness at the present day. Something of the same kind is seen in the caution with which the Church proceeds as to giving her formal approval to new shrines and places of pilgrimage. The same remark may be applied in numberless other instances, and it may very well be exemplified in the history of the modifications which the Church has, from time to time, admitted in the principles on which she insists for the sanction of new religious Orders or congregations. In the case of anything new in this kind, it must be expected that the Church will proceed with great circumspection, and that, as human lives do not last on like devotions or like shrines, there will be at least some whose attempts fail altogether before the principle at which they aim can succeed.

These remarks may serve to prepare us for a great number of difficulties and delays in the career of persons who are devoted to the introduction of novelties, however harmless and even desirable in themselves, even when there are no other powerful causes at work to hinder their designs. But it is unfortunately only too true that what has been said does not state all the difficulties which beset the enterprise of the heroic souls, of whose labours and sufferings the readers of these pages will hear so much. It was never in the eyes of authority, except, perhaps, at the very outset of the undertaking of Mary Ward and her companions, a question merely of the adaptation, to religious of the weaker sex, of the system which had produced fruits so glorious in the Society founded by St. Ignatius. In the first place, there was a strong repugnance on the part of the Society to engage its members in the government and guidance of religious women at all. This reluctance was a tradition in the Society, inherited from St. Ignatius himself, and always fostered by his successors in authority. St. Ignatius went so far as to obtain a Papal order, by which it was forbidden to the Fathers of the Society to have the charge of religious women. The reluctance of the Society to undertake such a burthen has descended to the present day, and will undoubtedly remain in the Society as long as the Society exists.

It is true that many Fathers of the Society have often exerted themselves in the foundation of new congregations of women, have often been the friends and guides of distinguished servants of God who have worn the habit of St. Teresa, of St. Jane Frances, and of a score of other foundresses. It is true that the Fathers in general have never refused to aid the spiritual necessities of nuns, as far as their rule permits, for to do this would be to turn away from many a great opportunity of advancing the glory of God. But the direction of religious women has always been outside the ordinary work of the Fathers, and they have often had to withdraw from positions of influence, too readily thrust upon them, in order to maintain the freedom in this respect which their holy Founder desired and intended them to maintain. Even almost in our own day, though several of the most prominent of the modern congregations of religious women, now labouring in the Church, have been aided in their beginnings either by Fathers of the Society or by priests, like the Pères de la Foi, who were desirous of imitating its rule at the time of its suppression, it has still opposed the institution of any that might claim to belong to it by any formal or even nominal connection.

It may be said that there is a wide difference between a female branch of the Society, and an independent religious congregation, following the

system of the Society. We shall see, in the course of this history, that Mary Ward and her associates never contemplated more than this last. In our own day no one would object to this. We are so accustomed to see the Rule of St. Ignatius adopted by new congregations, that the addition of one or two more to the number of such congregations does not suggest in any way an increase of the responsibility of the Society in regard of their direction. It was not so in the times of which we are now speaking. The institution of a religious Order of women, living according to the Rule of St. Ignatius, would then have been looked on, both by its enemies and by its friends, as involving some kind of connection between the new body and the old, especially if members of the Society were the advisers of the founders of the former. It is certain, therefore, in any case, that, however eager individual Fathers, acquainted with a particular congregation of women and interested in their work, might be to further its interests in every possible way, the weight of the authority of the Society would be thrown into the scale against the new institution, on the simple ground of the resolute determination of St. Ignatius to exempt his children from the burthen of alliances of this kind. And it is even more certain that the Society would never, as a body, take an active part in furthering such a scheme. This is one of the

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cases in which the general interests of a religious Order, which are under the special care of its rulers, may sometimes have to override the zeal and enthusiasm with which some particular work may have been taken up by individual members of that Order. Such a work may be admirable in itself, and yet the general good may require that it be left to others.

But this, again, is not all that is to be said to account to the readers of the Life of Mary Ward for a great deal of difficulty and opposition which she was to meet with, in quarters in which it would be natural, according to the prevailing spirit of our own day, to see her rather receive encouragement and assistance. If the Society, as distinguished from individual Fathers, was certain to oppose her plan, it was also certain to be opposed by the enemies of the Society. It was quite certain that, whatever line might be taken by the Society itself in such a case, the new proposal would be looked upon by the many jealous enemies, to whom the Fathers were objects of persistent distrust and opposition, as an indirect attempt to increase their influence. Such, unfortunately, are the conditions under which enterprises for the glory of God must too often be carried on in the Church. The story told in the following pages can never be fully understood unless we take into consideration a

whole series of circumstances and conditions of things of which it is neither pleasant nor easy for English Catholics to speak. The reader, as he passes on, will be conscious of a dark background to the picture at which he is looking. That dark background is not exclusively composed of features which might be expected in the time to which the story relates. It would be natural to expect that any account, even of private life, among Catholics in the days in which Mary Ward lived and worked, would be crossed here and there by the figures of the pursuivant and magistrate engaged on their unlovely task of trampling out the ancient faith, that we should hear of the cruel Anglican Bishops, as bloodthirsty as any of the minions of the Government of Elizabeth and James I. or his son, of the spies in the pay of the English Government, watching the doings of the Catholic exiles abroad, of the penal laws, of the Machiavellian oath of allegiance, of fines and tortures, and the whole array of weapons used by the heretics in power to seduce Catholics to apostacy, or to hunt to death those who would not apostatise. All these things are natural enough in any history of that day. What is not natural, but alas! equally historical, is the state of violent internal discord and mutual hostility which prevailed among the Catholics of England themselves, of the rivalries of men bent on

the same holy errand of the salvation of souls, of the jealousies which divided even prisoners for the same faith in the same dungeons, of the long list of complaints and memorials and petitions and counter statements of every kind which made the Catholic body at that time the tool and laughing-stock of its enemies, and the source of the most poignant grief to its friends. These most painful and shameful bickerings among the Catholics came on the top of a long series of misfortunes and mistakes, to seal the doom of the unfortunate remnant, as far as it was the good will of God that that doom should be sealed.

How fierce were the passions excited by the differences and bickerings of which we thus speak in the most general possible words, those are well aware who have studied many documents which survive to our own time, or who are familiar with the literature of those controversies. The danger of a schism from Catholic unity which they caused was very great, the mischief produced by them was incalculable, and when the great Day of Account shall reveal all secrets, it will perhaps be seen that the dissensions among the English Catholics did more to prevent the restoration of the ancient faith in the country, than the Anglican Establishment and the persecuting Government of which that Establishment has always been the subservient tool.

It is nowhere written, either in Scripture or in history, that persecution can altogether destroy the vitality of a Christian community, and that an usurping corporation can seize for itself on the affections of the children of that community, as well as on its broad lands and sacred edifices. But it is recorded as one of the sayings of the Incarnate Son of God by the Evangelists, that "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."¹

Who could wish that this story of these miseries should be dragged into light? It would have been alien to the spirit in which this biography has been undertaken, it would be alien to the best interests of the Catholic body, even in the days in which we live, to endeavour to make the present work in any sense a complete history of the unfortunate divisions among the English Catholics which signalized the period of which we are speaking. The history has never been written, and it would be of no advantage to us if it were written now. If it is ever written, it must be done in a spirit of truth as well with the utmost charity—for indeed, there were excuses enough in the circumstances of the times, at least partially to explain to us how so many good and holy men were divided, without making it necessary to cast the im-

¹ St. Matt. xii. 25.

putation of grave fault on any side. But the records of dissensions are never pleasant, and are only valuable when they are so framed as to conciliate sympathy rather than to arouse anger. The Catholics of that day were like a routed army in the confusion of disaster, for the effects of which no preparation had been made. They had no certain guidance on many points as to which our minds are clear, and their natural leaders were all swept away by the statecraft of the advisers of Elizabeth. If they made some mistakes, and if they misunderstood one another, their mistakes and misunderstandings can easily be condoned by those who inherit the blessings which they were striving to preserve for the country. In our own enjoyment of those blessings, we are surely not to be so unwise or so ungrateful as to delight in reviving the memory of conflicts which are happily most unlikely ever to recur.

It is not the less true that the history of Mary Ward cannot be fully understood, if these unfortunate circumstances of the Catholics of England in her time are not taken into account. She and those who worked with her had no direct part in those dissensions, which nevertheless silenced many a voice that might otherwise have been lifted on her behalf, and raised her up a swarm of angry and clamorous foes among the very men whom she was most desirous to assist. Thus she was deprived of every

kind of support, and exposed to opposition of every kind, and it may be said with perfect truth, that the bitterest and hardest of her trials were as bitter and hard as they were on account of these circumstances. Thus it is that the disputes in question are present, as has been said, as a part of the background of the picture which the author has had to draw. The reader is more likely to complain of incomplete treatment of this part of the story than of having its unlovely details forced unduly on his eye. The defect, if it be a defect, has not been altogether indeliberate. It seemed better to leave many things unsaid, than to make a labour of love and a story of charity and zeal the occasion for reference to quarrels among brethren. There may be some who will feel that full justice to the subject of this biography might require more plain speaking, and language of stronger censure than is here to be found. I would entreat such, if there are any, to reflect that we are not reading a history of the Catholics of England during the period of the life of Mary Ward, but simply an attempt to set forth to her countrymen the actions of a Christian heroine who was always most circumspect in speaking of any who made her suffer. The writer of the following pages seems to me to have written as Mary Ward would have had her write. And I for one would never have a part in any work that might indirectly revive, even in a small number of hearts, the

animosities of those days of calamity and dissension. And I would rather see high virtue lack its full meed of human praise—a breath which passes away and is gone, and which is in the eyes of the saints in Heaven of still less value now than it was to them while they were among us—than contribute in the slightest degree to the revival of the sad memories of such discords, even though I am glad to be convinced that the spirit which gave birth to so much evil is never likely to be resuscitated among us. But it is enough, in a work like this, to do substantial justice to the noble character to whose life it is devoted. If that can be secured, it matters little that some who wronged her should escape without the blame they may seem to deserve. When St. Antony of Padua was transported to Lisbon, that he might call back to life the man of whose murder his father was falsely accused, and after the dead man had sat up and declared solemnly that the accused was guiltless, it is said that the Saint was asked to point out who was the murderer. He replied that he had come to clear the innocent, but not to denounce the guilty. It is in the same spirit that this history has been compiled.

Little remains to be said by way of introduction to the present volume. It is with great satisfaction that I am able to adjourn the most difficult part of my task till I have to write the Introduction to the second volume of this biography. The darker

and less prosperous portion of the life of Mary Ward has yet to be related, though the last pages of the volume now presented to the reader may serve to prepare him for what is yet to come. The work has been written with the most conscientious care in the consultation of every authority, whether printed or manuscript, that was within the reach of the author, and much time has been spent, both in England and abroad, in the examination of documents which were not available to former writers on the same subject. It would be foolish to suppose that all that is absolutely possible in the way of research has been accomplished, and there must still be much valuable evidence forthcoming to reward the industry of future explorers in the same field. It is probable, in particular, that the hitherto inaccessible Archives at Rome must contain many letters and documents which, if consulted, might have thrown much additional light on many points which are as yet imperfectly explained. The circumstances which make this probable, and which make it also extremely desirable that researches should be made in the Archives in question, will be better understood when we come to the other volume of this narrative. I can only promise that no pains will be spared to gain all the information that can be gained, and to use it with all diligence.

A few words may now be said as to the autho-

rities which have been actually consulted in the composition of the present work. Twelve or more biographies of Mary Ward have already been compiled, besides innumerable short notices of her life which have been, even as late as the present day, introduced in Church histories and other works in Germany. But amidst all that has been written, one biography alone has hitherto been attempted in her own language. This narrative exists only in manuscript, and owes its origin to Winefrid Wigmore, one of the English ladies who were Mary Ward's first companions in the undertaking with which God inspired her. Winefrid was therefore an eye-witness of the greater part of the occurrences which she relates, as she lived with Mary Ward as a member of her community, on terms of closest intimacy, with but temporary separations, for a period of more than thirty-five years, until Mary's death. She was doubtless aided in her work of compilation by the other Sisters, who had also united themselves to Mary Ward during the first early years of her Institute. Of these Mary Poyntz has been specially named as her assistant. The reader of the following history will easily perceive the reasons for this selection. They wrote for the rest of their Congregation, especially those who had not known Mary personally in her lifetime, yet to whom every detail respecting one so beloved, to

whom all looked up as their Mother, was a matter of deep interest and veneration. Winefrid was probably residing in the house of the English Virgins in Paris when she put together her narrative. The only judgment which can be made as to the date of her manuscript, is that it was composed between the year of Mary Ward's death, 1645, and Winefrid's own death, which took place in 1657. Several copies exist in French as well as in English. In the present work, the French version has been compared with that in English, and when in some instances the former elucidates and gives force to the latter, the two have been interwoven. I think that little apology is needed for the very large use of this biography which has been made in the present work, even though it may have deprived it to some extent of the charm of originality.

There are three other writers, whose productions, all in manuscript only, have been used in the present Life. Vincentio Pageti, Secretary of Card. Borghese and Apostolic Notary, is the author of a biographical sketch of Mary Ward's history, which contains valuable information as coming from the pen of one who was living in Rome, and therefore personally saw or heard what he tells as to Mary's residence in that city. He wrote in Italian, in 1662, and presented his manuscript¹ to the Electress of Bavaria.

¹ Now among the Nymphenburg manuscripts.

He had been, subsequently to Mary's death, instantaneously freed from painful and incurable ophthalmia by the application of a piece of Mary's dress to his eyes.

The next biography in order of time is by Father Dominic Bissel,² Canon Regular of the Holy Cross in Augsburg, who wrote in Latin, five or six years later. His work, though longer than that of Pageti, is still in a very condensed form; but as he was living in a city where Mary Poyntz was then founding a house of the Institute, his statements may be considered as worthy of the highest credit.

The third manuscript³ mentioned above, by the famous Father Tobias Lohner, S.J., was written at Munich in 1689, and is much more voluminous than the others. It is in German, and is dedicated to the General Superior, Catharine Dawson, whom he names as "having been found worthy to be the successor in the government of Mary Ward's Company of English Ladies, from always keeping her before her eyes as her pattern." Father Lohner compares Mary Ward and her virtues to a brilliant mirror, in a gold and silver frame encrusted with gems. He was confessor to the community in the

² A copy is to be found among the Archives of the diocese of Westminster.

³ Now in the Nymphenburg Archives, written, with many corrections, in Father Lohner's own hand, and signed by him.

house at Munich for nearly twenty years. He quotes largely Mary Ward's own words, collected from those who had received them from her first Sisters. In studying his work it is easy to perceive that he has drawn to a great extent from Winefrid Wigmore's manuscript, but he makes additions of various kinds not found in any of the early biographers.

The first biographies of Mary Ward which passed through the press were composed severally by Father Corbinian Khamm, a learned Benedictine at Augsburg, in 1717, and Marco Fridl, a priest, who wrote some ten years later. They both make use of the manuscripts already named, the latter having in addition had access to most of Mary Ward's letters and other papers in the possession of the nuns at Munich. These, with other smaller works of later date, have been consulted, and their statements carefully compared with the original documents already mentioned, now at Nymphenburg. Among the smaller biographies, that by the late German historian, Dr. Buchinger, deserves special notice. His position gave him the means of searching the Royal Archives at Munich, of which he availed himself for his work, drawing thence many interesting details as to the foundation of the Institute in Bavaria. His "Notes on the Foundation and first spread of the English Ladies in Bavaria," are con-

tained in the seventeenth volume of the *Oberbayerisches Archiv für Vaterländische Geschichte*, a publication of the Bavarian Historical Society.

Another rather singular kind of testimony to numerous facts in Mary Ward's life has here to be named, as throwing considerable light on many of them, especially with regard to dates. Winefrid Wigmore's manuscript also receives very ample confirmation as to its authenticity and veracity from this source. This testimony consists of a series of fifty very large oil paintings which have existed for more than two hundred years in the Convent of the Institute at Augsburg, founded by Mary Poyntz in 1662. They pourtray a selection from the remarkable events of Mary Ward's history, commencing with a scene in her Yorkshire home when an infant, and ending with her death. It is observable that in the choice of subjects there is a careful omission of such scenes as would have involved the introduction of any of the persons of eminence either in Church or State with whom Mary was brought in contact, and, with a very few exceptions, of any portraits beyond those of the members of her Institute. This fact also gives evidence that the pictures were painted but few years after her death. Many of those through whom Mary received either favours or sufferings were still alive, or too recently dead to allow of their like-

nesses being placed in this historical series, from the peculiar circumstances of the position held by the Institute at that period of its existence.

Early in the eighteenth century the series was known among the nuns as *The Painted Life*. The pictures were also believed to have been drawn from the descriptions given to the artist by Mary Ward's first companions, who themselves shared in some of the occurrences they represent. Each contains an inscription in ancient German describing the subject. Through these inscriptions we learn that Father Lohner was acquainted with the paintings, for in his biography he quotes verbatim many of the rather lengthy though rounded sentences in which they severally give the histories portrayed.

The houses of the Institute in England and Germany have contributed for the compilation of the present work the use of the various original manuscripts belonging to them which in any way touch on Mary Ward's history. Of these the greater proportion are in Bavaria, and include a large number of her autograph letters, as well as copies of public documents and other papers. They were nearly all seized by the Bavarian Government at the general secularization of religious houses in the early part of the present century. Some few years since the collection was restored to the care of the nuns at Nymphenburg, near Munich, who now inhabit

part of the Royal Palace there, through the kind favour of King Louis I. and his two successors, the direct descendants of Mary Ward's first munificent patron in Germany, the Elector Maximilian the First, whose family have from generation to generation been the faithful friends and protectors of the Institute of the English Virgins.

H. J. C.

*London,
Feast of St. Aloysius, 1882.*

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THE LIFE OF MARY WARD.

BOOK THE FIRST.

THE GROWTH OF A CHOSEN SOUL.

CHAPTER I.

Parentage and first years of Mary Ward.

1585—1589.

"OUR dearest Mother, of happy memory, Mrs. Mary Ward, was eldest daughter of Mr. Marmaduke Ward, of Givendale,¹ in the county of York. Mulwith and Newby were manor-houses of his." So begins the manuscript² of Winefrid Wigmore, the faithful friend and follower of the lady whose life has to be traced in these pages. Before proceeding to give an account of Mary Ward herself, we must linger for a moment with her father and her ancestors. The names of Mulwith, Newby, and Givendale still survive in the neighbourhood of Ripon. Givendale and Mulwith are now only farm-houses of a far more modern date. Newby Hall—in its present state a handsome building of Queen Anne's reign—passed through the hands of the Croslands (who were still Catholics in the earlier part of the last century) and others, into those of the De Grey family. There is

¹ Leland calls Givendale, "A fair manor place of stone" (*Itin.* vol. i. 95). See Note I. to this Book.

² Entitled, "A brief relation of the holy life and happy death of our dearest Mother, of blessed memory, Mrs. Mary Ward." It must be remembered, once for all, that Winefrid Wigmore, who died in 1657, used, in speaking of Mary Ward, the language then common in the community in which she lived. The reader will understand the word "Mother," in the natural and familiar sense, in which it is applied to one who has been the guide and spiritual friend of those who use it.

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but very scanty mention of the family of the Wards in the records of the period now under consideration, though numerous branches of them were scattered through Yorkshire and Durham. Of earlier times, when William the Conqueror came over, we are elsewhere told,³ there were seven Wards, brothers, all *Equites Aurati*,⁴ "Gilded Knights," and one of these, Edgar, was made Warden of the Northern Borders in 1072. Later on the Wards were numbered among the powerful barons, so formidable on the side either of or against the Sovereigns of England in the middle ages. They were summoned to sit as barons in Parliament in the reigns of Edwards I., II., and III. Sir Simon de Warde was one of the Custodes of Northumberland and Tynemouth, and in 1313, was among the Barons associated against Piers Gaveston. Afterwards restored to royal favour, he was Custos of Berwick, and commanding in the Scotch wars, and subsequently he sat in the Parliament which dethroned Edward II.

Some of this family of the Wards were benefactors to Fountains Abbey, and others were buried at the Priory of Eschewold,⁵ or Esshold, in Ayredale (West

³ In the third Life of Mary Ward, written in Latin, by Father Dominic Bissel, Canon Regular of the Holy Cross at Augsburg, in 1674. He obtained his information from Mary Poyntz and the older members of the Institute of Mary. It does not appear to have been printed. A copy of the manuscript still exists in the archives of Westminster.

⁴ See Note II.

⁵ Sir Simon Ward, 1383, and Sir John Ward, 1453, both knights, were, according to their wills, buried there, as was also (from her will in 1474) Joan, relict of Roger Ward, sen., of Givendale. Joan Ward was Prioress of this house in 1480, and resigned her office in 1497 (Burton, pp. 140, 166; Dugdale, *Monast.* v. 473).

Riding), which was founded for six Cistercian nuns in the reign of Henry II. or Richard I.⁶ Speed says that at the dissolution of the Priory in 1547, it was said to be founded by "the ancestors of Christopher Warde." This Sir Christopher was the last male heir of the Wards of Givendale in the direct line, and had large possessions. He had been knighted on the battle-field of Alnwick in the Scotch wars, by the Earl of Northumberland in 1482, and in 1513 he led the Yorkshire levies to Flodden Field. He died in 1521, leaving only three daughters. And here the clue is wanting which would enable us to trace how Marmaduke Ward came to be possessor of Givendale and Newby sixty years afterwards, or in what way he was related to Sir Christopher.⁷ Francis Neville, of Thornton Bridge, the only son of Sir Christopher's eldest daughter Anne, died unmarried in 1529, leaving three sisters. But whether Marmaduke owed his heirship to one of them, or to one of Sir Christopher's brothers and sisters, of whom there were many, is a mystery which still has to be solved by genealogists. The difficulties of the times, which naturally led Catholics to conceal all that concerned them nearly from public notice, and the destruction of documents consequent, may well account for the absence of information on this point.

⁶ Subsequently to the foundation, Nicholas Ward gave lands in Hawksworth and pasture for twenty cows, to the convent.

⁷ Sir Christopher Ward married Margaret, daughter of Sir William Gascoigne of Gawthorpe. His second daughter, Johanna was married at the age of nine, to Sir Edward Musgrave, of Westmoreland. Margaret, the youngest, married John Lawrence, of Barley Court, York. The husband of Anne, the eldest daughter, who died before her father, was Ralph Neville, of Thornton Bridge. See Note III.

Of Marmaduke's father we know nothing, nor whether, as related both to the Percy family and to the Nortons⁸ and Markenfelds, he was concerned in any way in the rising of the Earl of Northumberland in 1569, in favour of Mary Queen of Scots, which extended to Ripon, where Mass was restored in the Cathedral. Topcliffe, the Earl's Yorkshire property, where he had been staying previously to joining the Earl of Westmoreland, was only a few miles distant from Ripon, and consequently from Newby. But for whatever reason, the Wards apparently withdrew from public notice afterwards, as far as possible. They did not give their family pedigree, with the numerous other Catholics of Yorkshire who did so, at the Visitation

⁸ Margaret Ward, daughter of Roger Ward of Givendale, and sister of Sir Christopher, married Sir John, the head of the Nortons of Norton Conyers, well known in history for their connection with the rising in the north in 1569. Sir John died 1520. It was their grandson, Richard Norton, whom the poet Wordsworth describes as a "goodly personage of seventy years, with

Magnific limbs of wither'd state,
A face to fear and venerate,
Eyes dark and strong, and on his head
Rich locks of silver hairs thick spread,"

and whose "eight sons

Stood by their sire on Clifford Moor,
To guard the standard which he bore"--

that namely of the insurgents, on which was "embroider'd

The sacred cross, and figured there,
The five dear wounds our Lord did bear."

The White Doe of Rylstone.

The pedigree of the descendants of Richard Norton is headed by an ancient genealogist, "A trybe of wicked people." He adds afterwards, "they be universally Papists."

of Robert Glover, the Marshal to Norroy King-at-Arms, in 1585. Marmaduke has written his name as attesting a pedigree concerning the family of his wife and that of her first husband, but this is all. Persecution was now hot against the Catholics, and either for safety's sake, or from other motives, he did not care to display his long genealogical tree, which would have vied with that of any of his neighbours, for he could have boasted of even Saxon descent. In an old manuscript book of heraldry,⁹ the arms of the Wards¹⁰ are thus described: "Azure, a Cross Patonce, or;" also "King Egbert's arms are a Cross Patonce, or," or in regal terms, "Jupiter, a Cross Patonce, Sol," and the aforesaid arms which he gave to the Wards for assisting him against the other six kingdoms." These arms are still to be seen in an old manuscript at the Herald's College, with the name of "Marmaduke Ward of Gyvendale" below them.

But though Marmaduke Ward showed himself indifferent to the honours of a long pedigree, he did not pass undistinguished for other and better things. Mary Ward herself thus writes of her father and mother in her first autobiography, composed in 1617: "My parents were noble, very virtuous, and suffered

⁹ Brit. Mus. *Lausdown MSS.* 856.

¹⁰ These arms, belonging to the Wards of Givendale, are to be seen in Ripon Cathedral, on the stone screen of the choir, of about the year 1459, and on the tomb of Sir Thomas Markenfeld, 1497, whose family are well known to have been also deeply engaged in the Earl of Northumberland's rising in the following century. For the family of the Nortons of Norton Conyers and Markenfelds, see *Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569* (London, 8vo, 1840, pp. 264, 275—288).

much for the Catholic cause." Winefrid Wigmore proceeds concerning her father :

His name is to this day famous in that country for his exceeding comeliness of person, sweetness and beauty of face, agility, and activeness, the knightly exercises in which he excelled, and above all for his constancy and courage in Catholic religion, admirable charity to the poor, so as in extreme dearth never was poor denied at his gate, commonly sixty, eighty, and sometimes a hundred in a day, to whom he gave great alms. And yet is also famous his valour and fidelity to his friend, and myself have heard it spoken of by several, but particularly and with much feeling by Mr. William Mallery, the eldest and best of that name, who were near of kin to our Mother, both by father and mother."

On her father's side, Sir William Mallory of Studley married Jane, daughter of Sir John Norton and Margaret Ward mentioned above ; through her mother, Sir W. Mallory, grandson of Margaret Ward, was her great-great-grandfather. According to Glover's Visitation, the latter must have been still alive when Mary was born. Mr. W. Mallery, or Mallory, named here, was his great-grandson, whose mother was Anne, daughter of the second Lord Evers, who was President of Wales.

The manuscript continues: "Her mother was Mrs. Ursula Wright, eldest daughter to Mr. William Wright, of Ploughland, first married to Mr. Constable, heir of Hatfield (as I take it), by whom she had no child." In the entry of the death of Mary's grandfather in the register of Welwick Church he is called Robert. His father, John Wright, came from Kent

into Yorkshire, in the reign of Henry VIII., and married Alice, daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Ryther, by whom he obtained Ploughland Hall in Holderness.¹¹ "The Ploughland house of the present day is a farmhouse, situated on an eminence, but has nothing particularly worthy of notice."¹² In the Wright and Constable pedigrees, Ursula Ward's first husband is named as John Constable, of Hatfield (Holderness). He was seventeen years old at his father Hilary's¹³ death in 1571, and was his eldest son and heir.¹⁴

The first marriage of Ursula Wright must have been one of those juvenile betrothals customary at

¹¹ Peacock's *Yorkshire Catholics*, p. 124.

¹² Poulson's *Holderness*, vol. ii. p. 517.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 516; also Forster's *Yorkshire Families*, Constable of Flamborough pedigree.

¹⁴ In 1580, when the Ecclesiastical Commission of the North went on circuit, John Constable, of Hatfield, was called before them at Old Malton, when he "appeared and confessed that he neither resorted to the church, or doth communicate, nor hath done this five year last past." Upon which "they commanded him to attend upon all their progress and circuit, and to confer with the Lord Archbishop his Grace and his chaplain, and hear sermons preached by them, during the same time and space until their return homewards." "The said John Constable utterly refused the same, and was thereupon committed to close prison in the Castle of York, *quousque*," &c. (From the Acts of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, York Minster, quoted in Father Morris's *Troubles*, series iii.). In vol. F. of Father Grene's manuscript collection concerning the English persecution, it is said of him, "He might well be named John, because the grace of sweet Jesus did appear in his godly life, in his words, works, and in all his doings." His companion in prison says, in the same manuscript, "So sober, so constant, and so godly a youth maketh me ashamed of my former days." "Master Constable did fall into a grievous sickness, and departed this life in the year of our Lord 1581" (from *Records S.J.*, by H. Foley, series vi. p. 223).

the period, for it appears from the register of Welwick Church that the eldest of her two elder brothers, John Wright, was baptized early in the year 1568. If this date is correct, she could not have been more than fourteen when she married for the second time. Winefrid Wigmore proceeds to tell us : " Her first (child) by Mr. Ward was this blessed child, our dearest Mother, who at the font was called Jane," a family name, perhaps, after her ancestress, Joan Ward, Prioress of Eschewold, 1480, "and by Confirmation, Mary." She was born, as we learn from other sources, at the manor-house of Old Mulwith,¹⁵ where her parents lived in quietness and retirement, to escape persecution as far as might be, her birthday being January 23, 1585, now the feast of the Espousals of our Lady, and also dedicated to St. Emerentiana, martyr, to whom Mary, in consequence, had a great devotion in her after life. As Marmaduke Ward continually maintained some missioner upon his estate, her parents would not have had the same difficulty about her baptism which numbers of Catholics then experienced concerning their children ; but, like these, she must equally have been "baptized secretly, and not at the church, but when, where, or by whom they know not," as in the return made of other newly-born children in a List of Recusants of Yorkshire at a later date (1604). She was dedicated by her parents to the Blessed Virgin from her

¹⁵ *Gottseliges Leben*, &c., p. 7. by Father Lohner, S.J., who was confessor to many of the older of "the English Virgins" in Munich, and relates what he heard from them. This was the fourth biography of Mary Ward, and the first written in German in 1689.

cradle, and before she could speak plainly, we are told that she had learned to say the Litany of our Lady, the *Angelus*, *Salve Regina*, and the Rosary, and said them openly everywhere. It was from her own tender affection and devotion as a child to the Mother of God that she asked and obtained permission to take her name at Confirmation. It is related of her that this change of name was an unspeakable joy to her, and by it alone she was afterwards known.

We hear from Winefrid Wigmore of the first word which little Mary spoke, in connection with a severe accident, from which she was preserved in a remarkable manner, when she could scarcely walk, and could not speak, and was tottering about close to some open window or steps. "From the nurse's breast, as it were, marked out for Heaven, and before the time babes use to speak, hearing her mother, forth of a sudden apprehension the child might fall, say 'Jesus, bless my child,' turned with a sweet smile and said distinctly, 'Jesus,' which was the first, and all the words she spoke of many months after."

We have already spoken of the series of pictures of the life of Mary Ward, called by the name of the Painted Life. The first of this interesting series represents Mary when two or three years of age tottering across the room to her mother (who is standing with another lady on the opposite side), and saved from a bad accident by saying the name of Jesus. Underneath are the words in ancient German, "Jesus was the first word of the infant Mary, after which she did not speak for many months." Among the documents in the archives of

the Institute at Nymphenburg is a list, or rather a copy, also in old-fashioned German, of the inscriptions upon these paintings. The inscriptions contain many dates, not given by the author of Winefrid Wigmore's manuscript and Mary's early biographers, who like many writers of that day did not always place events in their right chronological order, and almost wholly omit naming the year in which they occurred.

Mary spent the first five years of her life at Mulwith, and it is of these, as well as others subsequently, that Mother Winefrid writes :

Her very childish years were not only exempt from displeasing actions which commonly accompany those years, but adorned with such graces and noble advantages as rendered her amiable and agreeable to all, never gave offence, but always sought out occasions to pleasure the very servants, though to her own incommmodity ; as when, in the year '42, I being at Newby with this said our dearest Mother of happy memory, the Lady Blakestone recounted with great feeling, the memory was to that day kept in that town of her goodness, meekness, and graciousness to her father his servants and neighbours.

In her first autobiography, Mary Ward thus describes the manner in which her father brought up his family :

My father, as his charity towards the poor and commiseration of all in necessity was such, as I have never experienced the like in any secular person since, so his care of his children, especially in matters of purity, and that we should never taste the poison of heresy, was so great as I wish the like were to be found in all Catholic parents now-a-days. In his

house he would never permit to be read or kept such books as that treated of sensual or worldly things. I remember he hath caused my mother (who was no less eminent in the virtue of modesty, as witnesses well both her own carriage and the strict watch she kept over the maids in her house) to turn away such servants as were otherwise very profitable, for some such little signs of lightness as now-a-days are accounted harmless and a recreation convenient to banish melancholy even amongst Catholics. And when by occasion we were to live away for any little time with such of our kindred as were schismatics, I shall never forget the exhortations he would give us touching the necessity for salvation of Catholic religion, and his instant desires that all his should live and die children of God's Church.

Mary goes on to give an instance of his watchfulness over and correction of his children :

He hated swearers, and would not endure this vice in us, I living with these my parents till the age of five or thereabouts, at which years I had judgment to discern (and great ingratitude I have no sooner), my father's meaning in divers things, being therefore in a room where himself was writing, playing with one of my companions that sometimes came to our house, she suddenly swore (by Christ His sacred wounds), and I presently repeated the same her words several times in way of reprehension, with desire that my father should hear me and love me the better. God permitted that he hear me say the words, but minding not what went before thought I had sworn, and coming therefore with this conceit with great choler unto me he corrected me himself (which was unusual, and the first and last time that ever I could learn he did the like to any of us his children), and afterwards heard me speak.

CHAPTER II.

Five years at Ploughland.

1589—1594.

WHEN Mary had reached her fifth year, her grandmother, Mrs. Wright, of Ploughland, took her to live with her. This lady was Ursula, daughter of Nicholas Rudston, of Hayton, by his second wife, Jane, daughter of Sir W. Mallory, who was thus Mary Ward's great-great-grandfather. She and her husband were then leading very holy lives in great seclusion, after having endured severe persecutions for the faith with the utmost intrepidity and courage. Mary Ward thus writes of them in her own autobiography :

I was not now full five years old when, by what means or procurement I know not, I was sent to my grandfather and grandmother, parents to my mother, to be brought up, who, for her great virtue, was much noted and esteemed. She had in her younger years suffered imprisonment for the space of fourteen years together, in which time she many times made profession of her faith before the President of York (Huntingdon) and other officers. She was once, for her speeches to the said Huntingdon, tending to the exaltation of Catholic religion and contempt of heresy, thrust into a common prison or dungeon, amongst thieves, where she stayed not long because, being much spoken of, it came to the hearing of her kindred, who procured her speedy removal to the castle prison where she was before. At her entrance

into this dungeon, the malefactors judged she had been committed for theft or murder (for such were all that came to that cave), and said unto her that she must either give sixpence into their common purse, as the custom of those that came there at their first entrance was, or else she should not eat of their common meat, which was that which good people of charity would give : all sorts of meats put together in one vessel, and so given them in at the prison door. To those their words, my grandmother made no other reply than that she would willingly give them the sixpence, and so she did. When I came unto her she had been released some few years and had leave to live at home.

The Earl of Huntingdon was President of the North from 1572 to 1599. We read of him, that being "a most rank heretic, and made President of Yorkshire, he had promised Queen Elizabeth that he would make all Papists to go to the church, if she would let him alone, whereupon he was permitted to do what he would, and so began to rage against Catholics as like a furious lion. But yet Almighty God made His servants strong enough to cope with him."¹

"He (Lord Huntingdon) imprisoned all the gentlewomen and ladies in the countries, some in one castle, some in another. In Sheriff Hutton Castle were inclosed my Lady Constable, my Lady Babthorpe, my Lady Ingleby"—these three were all more or less related to Mary Ward—"my Lady Lawson, Mrs. Metham, Mrs. Hungate, locked up every one in a several vast great chamber, not one permitted to see or speak with another, nor to have a maid of their own but such as was put unto them. What shifts the poor gentle-

¹ Old Manuscript quoted in *Troubles*, series i. p. 228, Father Morris; and also series iii. p. 214, from the "History of the Persecution in the North," by Father Holby.

women used to get one to another : what devices they had to get to open locks, to break windows, and to make passages, not only one to another, but for a priest also to come to them, are very memorable, and worth the collecting."² The same writer says : "In the prison of York there were at one time, not a twelvemonth ago, no fewer than fifty prisoners, of which almost thirty were condemned for *premunire*"—the penalty was to lose all temporalities and to be imprisoned for life—"for the oath, and also to death. The necessities of these prisoners and their wants in prison hath often been so great, that they living all in common at a common table of that which in charity is sent unto them, they had no more but every man according to the rate of a penny a day."

Such was the prison to which Mrs. Wright was condemned, and thus Catholic ladies fared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

While Mary Ward was living in her grandfather's house, in 1592, he was again summoned before the President and Commissioners, and was desired to bring his wife with him. Nor were the other members of this pious family less firm in their profession of faith, though they adopted other ways of manifesting it. William Wright,³ Robert's son by his first wife, Ann, daughter of Thomas Grimston, of Grimston Garth, and half-brother to Mary Ward's mother, married Anne Thornton, of East Newton. Of her we read in a List of Recusants, 1604,⁴ as follows : "Wel-

² Father Pollard's "Recollections of the Yorkshire Mission," *Troubles*, series iii. p. 463, Father Morris, S.J.

³ The present Wright family of Kelvedon, Essex, are descended from this William Wright.

⁴ Peacock, *Yorkshire Catholics*, p. 124.

week. A lunatick person, Anne Wright, wife of William Wright, hath long absented herself from ye church, as is thought that she is lunatick." This assumption of lunacy is made transparent enough by the inscription which accompanies the brass effigies of the husband and wife on a slab in Welwick Church, Holderness:⁵ "Here lie interred ye bódies of William Wright, of Plowland, Esq., and Ann, his wife, who, after they had lived lovingly together ye space of fifty yeares in the fear of God and love of men, finished a faire pilgrimage to a joyfull Paradice, Ann, ye 28 of Dec. in the yeare of grace 1618, and ye said Willm. ye 23 August, A. Dni. 1621, whose sowles God hath in His blessed keeping. Memoria justi vivet in Eternum." Ursula's Ward's brothers and sisters will be spoken of later on.

With her heroic grandmother, then, and her family, the little Mary passed the next years of her life until she was ten. Her holy example must have impressed the child strongly. In her English autobiography she thus continues: "I remained with her near five years, the most of which time I lodged with herself, for the house being great she was very careful lest, by idle or ill company, I should be drawn to offend God (and although my grandfather were living, yet, for holy respects, they lodged in several chambers). And so great a prayer she was as that I do not remember in that whole five years that ever I saw her sleep, nor did I ever awake, when I perceived her not at prayer."

While with her grandmother Mary's devotion to

⁵ Poulson's *Holderness*, vol. ii. p. 514.

our Lady grew apace. Father Lohner says that, "from her youth she honoured the holiest Mother of God with such devotion that in her heart nothing was dearer, in her mouth nothing sweeter than Mary." She now began to recite the greater Day Hours and the Litany of our Blessed Lady, together with the whole Rosary, and many other prayers, all of which she continued to say daily during the rest of her life. Mary writes of this period of her childhood with her usual humility, concealing and covering what was so commended in her at that time, by the addition of some contemporaneous fault or temptation, depreciating all that was good in herself, and attributing her preservation from sin to the grace and watchful care of God. Thus she conceals the facts of her fasts, many prayers, and almsgivings from the age of five years.

Mrs. Wright had the custom of sending many alms, both of money and other things, to the poor Catholic prisoners, whose sufferings in the loathsome prisons of those days she herself had so largely shared.

She used to provide much alms for other like prisoners, which she sent them privately at several times of the year. Once I heard her give order (amongst other things) for the killing of certain pullen [poultry] some of which I called and accounted mine, coaxing them as children will such toys. I was sorry, but made no sign to have understood of any such thing. Soon after I asked my grandmother, which appeared to show devotion, when she would send any alms to the prison? She bid me tell why I asked. I answered, because I was desirous such pullen should be so bestowed. This seemed to please her much, and I said it only to gain her esteem.

There is another story told of Mary, that once on her showing joy when the money was counted, her grandmother gave her a few small pieces. Some days afterwards, as the lady was singing some hymns, Mary came to her and asked her whether she would not send something again to the prisoners. This question pleased her grandmother very much, and when she inquired of the child why she said this, Mary replied that she wished to send her money also to them, which she often did afterwards. In narrating this incident again she deprives it of its merit, by saying that the good she did in her childhood at this age was not so much for the love of it in itself, but from a vain complacency and self esteem, and that she gave this money in order to be praised by her grandmother. Mary much laments also that while with her grandmother she had as a playfellow a relation, a young girl like herself, who was rather given to vanity, and had in this and other things been a bad example to her :

There lived in my grandfather's home a near kinswoman of mine whom God had endued with many excellent gifts of nature, though she used them not to His honour nor her own good. She had allowed to attend her a young gentlewoman, who though in show modest, yet was she indeed light of carriage. This kinswoman of mine was not much older than I; she loved me much, and I bore her, exceeding her, great affection. When I could without blame be from my grandmother, I was for the most part in her company. I saw her with the help of her woman do many things which I knew to be not well; she likewise made me of her counsel in most of her intentions and desires, which, if God's goodness and providence over me had not been so

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very great, might have done me much harm. I kept her counsel in all, for so she often entreated me, and so far as I can judge, I was naturally inclined to do so, yet this was the cause, I fear, of her further falls. I want both time and words to express the many and great dangers I so narrowly escaped in those five years while I lived where she was, but I now see they were such, all considered, as none but God, Who can do all things, could have preserved me from falling most grievously into that which, once begun, would by all likelihood have been my eternal ruin. I was not then addicted to any one virtue. When my grandmother commanded me to pray, I sat in the place, but spent my time in sports. Yet wanted I not wit to seek cunningly to have my own will oft-times by others, and to excuse it, sometimes in overt, or otherwise. This, my lack of virtue, disposed me if occasion had been offered for vice, and the company of my kinswoman might have afforded means; and supposing my fall, my bashfulness was such as that in all likelihood I should have committed a greater sin than before by concealing what was done and passed. O my God, in what state had I now been if you had not done all!

It would appear from what follows that this young relation of Mary's was her aunt Martha, her mother's younger sister, who, if we remember Ursula Wright's age at the time she married Marmaduke Ward, would have been a few years only older than Mary. Martha Wright married Thomas Percy, afterwards the Gunpowder Plot conspirator, who was agent to the Earl of Northumberland, his cousin. The Wards were related to the Percy family, and Thomas Percy could well be living at Newby, while engaged in looking after the earl's estate at Topcliffe, not many miles distant. Mary continues thus :

This kinswoman went once to see my mother, who was very near her in blood, though unlike in condition, and there living at my father's house one whom he intended to match with me when I should come to years of consent, God so disposed as that before my kinswoman's return to me again at my grandfather's, this young man and she were married. Here once more our Lord prevented what would have hindered my greater good. What was there, my God, in me worthy yourself; why was *she forsaken* and I chosen? She excited me, I think, in all good gifts of nature, and I had then no inclination to virtue, neither affection to practice anything that good was. Let not this and other, *your* favours, O Friend of friends, I humbly beseech, be to my greater condemnation whilst still receiving, I concur not with all and remain so ungrateful.

And now follows the catalogue of what Mary considers the enormities of her childish years, for it must be remembered that she was not yet ten years old :

"In this five years my fortune was asked and told several times, once or twice I think I procured it; at the least as I remember, I was glad to have it, and according to my capacity believed what was said." Her young aunt fasted in honour of St. Agnes, and once induced Mary to imitate her, which she thus relates: "I once intended, and did till I felt myself starved with hunger, to fast St. Agnes's fast for the foolish and accustomed reason, as I remember, by the speech and example of my aforesaid kinswoman, and fasted for a good part of the day; but being then very hungry I broke off. I think I once procured that unlawful practice of sive and shears (*sic*)⁶ to be done, exercised and help to do it myself,

⁶ Both these were old popular superstitions. Any one fasting on St. Agnes's day was supposed to see in their dreams at night the persons they were to marry. To discover a thief by the sieve and shears, the points of the shears were to be stuck in the wood of the sieve,

for the finding out of a trifle of mine that was lost, and I am morally certain that in the execution of these three last things I had some fear and understanding that they were sin. If these years I remembered any one act that were good, I would truthfully set it down, for I am to tell all."

Of the graces and winning sweetness of her childhood, which made so great an impression upon others, Mary tells nothing. In person, it is said of her that at this age, "her features were exquisite, her look angelic, and her modesty sweet and graceful."

There is an incident related in the autobiography of one of the students, preserved in the archives of the English College at Rome, which by adding names (so greatly omitted in those times) seems to point to one of Mary Ward's visits at Ripley Castle to her relations the Inglebys⁷ at this period, especially if coupled with what Winefrid Wigmore says concerning "the efficacy of her words and letters, even her presence," while still "in her tender years." John Jackson, born in 1581, says that he "went to York, on his father's death, when he was thirteen, in 1594, to learn the rudiments of law from a barrister," Sampson Ingleby,⁸ steward to the Earl of Northumberland. "He

which two persons supported balanced upright with their two fingers. Then either a mystical form of words, or the forty-ninth Psalm, was to be said, and St. Peter and St. Paul asked if A. or B. were the thief, naming all the suspected persons. On naming the real thief, "the sieve turns suddenly round about" (Grose and others quoted in Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 35, and vol. iii. pp. 351, 352.)

⁷ The ancestors of the present Sir Henry Ingilby, of Ripley Castle. The lodge and tower only remain of the old building, erected, as is seen from a date carved in the latter, in 1555.

⁸ There are ancient portraits at the castle of Sir William Ingleby, the builder of the mansion, and his sons, Sir William and Sampson.

being in London, a quarrel arose between his younger brother," John, "and myself, on which account I resolved to return to my mother, after spending three months there. On leaving, his elder brother, (for he had three," William, David, and John,) "persuaded me to accompany him to his mansion," Ripley Castle, "until his brother returned. Whilst I was there a certain noble Catholic virgin," Mary Ward, "had lately arrived, with whom I very frequently conversed upon the subject of the Catholic faith, and who satisfactorily removed many doubts from my mind, and some others we postponed for the time, as she said she was going to her grandmother," Mrs. Wright, "who lived near, in a day or two, who would remove every doubt from me. She produced many probable reasons in support of the points upon which we had before treated, and which had appeared to me so contrary to reason. On my departure the noble lady," Mrs. Wright, "gave me a Rosary, the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and the Psalter of Jesus." It is true that at the date of this incident Mary could only have been about ten years of age; but if at ten years of age young maidens were then bestowed in marriage, and even had a voice in the matter, it need not be incredible that in such times of general persecution they should be in some degree capable of discussing grave matters of faith, or that these should form the subject of conversation with their playmates.

The latter is painted in a singular manner. A hand issuing from a wood on each side of the picture extends to him, the one a cup of wine, the other a purse, to represent his unimpeachable integrity in his office.

Mary's education was not neglected by her grandmother during the five years that she lived with her. Beside the instruction usually given to children, she learned Latin, in which she was sufficiently proficient to be able to write it fluently in after life, and also to be well read in the writings of the Fathers.

CHAPTER III.

Family life at Old Mulwith.

1594—1597.

MARY'S grandfather, Robert Wright, died in 1594, and her grandmother then perhaps went to reside in the quiet household of the Wards at Mulwith. Mary, continuing her own history, says : "I was now almost ten years old, when my father sent for me home to his house." A break here occurs in the autobiography, and when Mary re-commences it, she proceeds at once to her fifteenth year or thereabouts. Winefrid Wigmore and others relate some incidents which occurred meantime. It must have been soon after Mary's return home that her life was once more preserved, and she was restored by the use of the Most Holy Name in a bad accident which befell her, and which is thus related by Winefrid Wigmore :

This servant of God, yet not above nine or ten years old, forth of, and (as may be supposed) designed by the enemy of all good to cut off her life, would needs make one of her mother's maids carry her on her shoulders, whence she fell her own and the maid's height, and lighting on her head with so much force that she was wholly stunted (*sic*) and lost her speech. The maid, extremely terrified, laid her in bed ; it was bed-time, and she had nothing but

her linen on ; she had her understanding good, and thought with herself, could she but once say "Jesus," she would willingly die; which sacred Name she at last pronounced, and it brought her so much sweetness and love as all her life after she was most sensible of, and in that instant restored to her former health without any the least harm.

The family at Old Mulwith consisted of at least four children besides Mary. Of her sisters, known to us by name, Barbara and Elizabeth, the former was little more than a year younger than herself, and in after life became a dear and cherished companion and friend, united to her both in mind and soul by a similarity of tastes and even of character. The name of her eldest brother is uncertain, though possibly John—a frequent baptismal name in the Ward family. The very year of Mary's return home, 1594, her second brother, George, was born, who will be occasionally mentioned in the following chapters, though but few details of note are recorded of any of her brothers and sisters, with the exception of Barbara.

Not long after Mary's return, a dangerous fire broke out in the house, an occurrence which brought to light the character and interior qualities of Marmaduke's little daughter, and proved how much they had been strengthened by her grandmother's example. This was in the year 1595 ; a great crowd quickly collected, the inmates and those outside, the neighbours and tenants, all endeavouring to put it out. All were full of eagerness and hurry, and so occupied were they with their efforts, that when at last some one inquired for the children three of them were

nowhere to be found. Their father immediately hastened through the rooms in spite of the flames, and discovered Mary and her two little sisters in one of them, quietly saying the Rosary together, which they had begun and steadily continued while the rest of the mansion was in confusion. Mary gives her own account of this matter in a fragment written in English in 1627. The blazing castle and the children at their beads, and Mary's previous dangerous accident, are well portrayed in two of the series of "The Painted Life."

I had great confidence in the power and help of our Blessed Lady when I was yet young. When I was but at ten years old, and so much as betwixt St. Emerantiana's Day, in January, and the feast of the Purification (*sic*) of our Blessed Lady, the Lent following, upon which day my father had great loss by fire. I being present and seeing the danger, called earnestly upon our Blessed Lady, beseeching her to extinguish the fire, often repeated, with great confidence that if it were not her feast I should fear the worst, but being hers I had no doubt but that she would help us, &c. And perceiving by the noise of people the danger still to continue, I took two of my younger sisters (both of which were after so happy as to live and die of our Society) and went into a lower room of the house, where stood a trunk or coffer filled with linen damask, which I had heard some say my mother laid apart for me; which coffer, with the help of my sisters, I drew into the chimney of the same room, and then we set ourselves to pray the Mother of God that she would not permit the house to be burnt, &c.; and this with great earnestness and confidence, in which prayer we had all three been burnt, but that our Lord provided, by the intercession of His Blessed Mother, as I verily believe, that my father (whose love to his children was boundless),

seeing the case irremediable, the whole house of a flame and all in it to be lost, called for his children, and missing us three, himself entered the house again.

. The courage and calmness in the face of danger, and confidence in God and in the power of prayer, that Mary thus early showed, were the tokens and precursors of the same gifts and graces which shone in her after years. We are told of her that as a child, she was of a very courageous and intrepid disposition, and that this was only kept in check by great natural bashfulness and modesty, together with sweetness and affability. She was accustomed to say at a later period of her life, that those who are of too timid a disposition never advance very far in virtue, as great virtues require a great soul; and she complained of this bashfulness as being in her girlhood an ill-regulated quality and imperfection in herself, and sometimes exceeding due measure, as she would rather shut herself up in her room and was quite confused if any one looked at her and said that she was Miss Ward. Yet of her in her mature years her biographer, Pageti,¹ writes, that "God had endowed her with so brave a heart, that in her own day it was more a matter of admiration than of imitation," and

¹ Vincentio Pageti, Apostolic Notary in Rome, and Secretary to Cardinal Borghese, wrote the second manuscript Life of Mary Ward in 1662, with the title, *Breve Raconto della Vita di Donna Maria della Guardia*. It is short, and in Italian, and was dedicated and sent to the Electress of Bavaria, Adelheid Henrietta. This Life (now among the Nymphenburg manuscripts), together with those by Bissel, Lohner, and others made use of in this work, are given as authorities in *Oberbayerisches Archiv, herausgegeben von dem historischen Vereine*. 17er Band.

those who afterwards opposed her in Rome spoke of her as being "a woman with the daring of a man."

We need not be at a loss to know whence Mary derived her courage when we consider the deeds of others of her family. Besides her heroic grandmother, we are told of Sir William Mallory, already mentioned as the grandfather of the latter, that he "was so zealous and constant a Catholic, that when heresy first came into England, and Catholic service was commanded to be put down on such a day, he came to the church and stood there at the door with his sword drawn, to defend that none should come in to abolish religion, saying he would defend it with his life, and continued for some days keeping out the officers, as long as he possibly could do it."² And to come still nearer, her mother, Ursula Ward's brothers John and Christopher Wright, two of the chief conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot, both lost their lives in its behalf, being shot at Holbeach with Catesby and Percy, before the rest were taken prisoners. Of John Wright, it is stated, that "in his youth and for the most of his time he was very wild and disposed to fighting, so much so, that it was noted of him and Percy (his brother-in-law) that if they heard of any man in the country to be esteemed more valiant and resolute than others, one or other of them would surely have picked some quarrel against him and fought with him to make trial of his valour. He became Catholic about the time of my Lord Essex his attempt, in which he was. He grew to be staid and of good sober carriage after he was a

² *Troubles*, series i. p. 227.

Catholic, and kept house in Lincolnshire, where he had priests come often both for spiritual comfort and their own in corporal helps. He was about forty years old, strong and a stout man, and of a very good wit though slow in speech."³ Christopher, his younger brother, is described as "though like him in face, being fatter and a lighter coloured hair and taller of person, yet very like to the other in conditions and qualities, and both esteemed and tried to be as stout a man as England had, and withal a zealous Catholic, and trusty and secret in any business as could be wished."

Ursula Ward's sister Martha chose for her husband, as we have seen, Thomas Percy, mentioned above as a fellow-conspirator with Catesby, and as resembling her brother in courage and valour. After Percy's death she lived in a very retired way in London; and doubtless Mary Ward had intercourse with her there, at a time when she herself was giving good proof both of the family spirit and courage and of zeal for the Catholic faith.

Mary already imitated her grandmother by an undaunted profession of the faith, at the period of which we are writing. In the words of one of her biographers: "When she went during those early years to visit Protestant neighbours or connections, she always behaved in every way as a good Catholic, and was not in the least ashamed of the prayers and other usages of the Church, and in so courageous a manner, that many heretics were astonished and

³ Father John Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, pp. 59, 71.

greatly edified by her fervour. She protected herself by prayer, commending herself to the Divine Mother and to her Guardian Angel, and by the sign of the Cross, when she had to make such visits. She would in no way let it be thought that she took pleasure in the society of Protestants, and was very reserved in her intercourse with them. She did not care to hide from them that she possessed statues of saints, rosaries, and Agnus' Dei, so that they all very well knew that she was an enemy to their faith. But in spite of this, they had such an esteem for her that they never abused the Catholic religion before her. She did not care, however, for their good opinion and flattery, and would not receive presents from them or demonstrations of regard."

To continue the narrative of Mary Ward's life at Mulwith : " Her being the eldest, so beautiful, and of such expectation, was cause her parents were seeking her a marriage, when she was but ten years old, and for that end, a youth, her equal, rich, and very handsome, was found out and especially proposed by her near kinsman, the Earl of Northumberland." This Earl of Northumberland was Henry, the ninth Earl, son of Henry, Earl of Northumberland, who was murdered in the Tower, and nephew of the attainted Earl, beheaded in 1571. He was at the commencement of the reign of James I. in high favour with that monarch, but on the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, in which his " kinsman and most confident familiar," Thomas Percy (Mary Ward's uncle) was concerned, the Earl was supposed to be privy to it, and was fined £ 30,000 by the Star Chamber and condemned to be im-

prisoned in the Tower for life. £20,000 was exacted of this sum, and fifteen years' imprisonment materially injured his health. He died in 1632.

The gifted youth so well recommended as a husband, was named Redshaw,⁴ of a Northumbrian family, and it seems that the juvenile bride was by no means ill inclined towards him. "God having not yet prevented her little heart with His extraordinary love, she innocently meant the said party should be her husband, but with so great modesty and care of her honour, as she was wont to allege passages of those times," this she does in her first autobiography, "as condemnations of her preferring human respects before her care of avoiding God's offence." The narrative continues :

The Divine Providence having designed this selected soul for a higher state, would not let this love, though so innocent, have longer place in her heart reserved to Himself, disposed that this hopeful young man was on urgent affairs concerning his own estate to go to London and so home. God, Whose works are ever admirable, weaned her from this beginning of love, by an apprehension of some lack of constancy and fervour in her pretended spouse his respects to herself, which yet really was not so, for he both loved and honoured her till his death, which in a few months after happened. Though God be the beginning, middle, and end of all our good, yet that goodness (so admirable in His operations in the soul of man) seemeth, as it were, not to move but as we will, or as one may say give Him leave, by leaving occasions, and corresponding with means offered. This blessed child, thus far prevented by grace, began to have such feelings of God's virtue as was

⁴ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 16 ; and the *Painted Life*, pict. 2.

rare and something extraordinary yet conversable and agreeable to all, her conversation was always so sweet and affable, not in a manner to startle and amaze one, but as if God would by her make appear the loveliness of virtue with the force and sweetness of it, and as if by her His Divine design was to draw many to Himself, their Final End, not with violence and strife, but as an apparent and satisfying truth. The foundation thus laid in her tender years grew with her, together with increase of virtue and grace, and inexpressible was the efficacy which her words and letters, and even her presence and gestures, had in them to damp vice, wean from all sensible love and those mean things the fancy of man useth to hover about, and in a sweet manner forcibly with truth to put a soul into God as its centre, that made one, as it were, say to themselves, "What have I done hitherto?"

But the love and esteem which Mary thus inspired were made the means by Divine grace of advancing the growth of holiness in her soul, for after her eleventh year, she began to perceive that what stood most in her way was being so much esteemed by others, both for her station and fortune, as well as for her natural gifts of mind and body. She therefore set herself in all ways to repress and destroy love of praise in herself and the least desire for the good opinion of those around her.

CHAPTER IV.

First Communion at Harewell.

1597—1600.

THE fire at Mulwith may have caused the removal of the Wards to their other domain at Newby, for we next hear of Mary at the latter place, and of her being again asked in marriage by a young man named Shafto, of another Northumbrian family. The Painted Life informs us that she was then in her twelfth year, and that Shafto was considered "a very well qualified partie," but that Mary, "as one who already esteemed God only as worthy of her love, refused him with great warmth."

The persecution against the Catholics was at this time carried on with extreme violence. In 1596 and the two following years, the storm raged fiercely around York. Not only were the prisons crowded with recusants, but eleven persons were executed for the faith, three being priests and eight laymen, both gentlemen and others. Two women, Anne Tesh and Bridget Maskew, were condemned to be burnt "for persuading a minister to be a Catholic," and though reprieved, were left in prison until the accession of James I. Besides many others, Ralph Grimston, of Nidd, connected with the Wright family, was condemned as a felon for assisting one of the priests,

Peter Snow, a native of Ripon, executed in 1598. Whether from any such cause, or that he had been summoned to appear with his wife before the Lord President, as so many other Catholics were, Marmaduke Ward found it necessary to break up his household and leave the country, like some among them, in 1597-8. Our manuscript thus continues: "A great persecution arising in that country, her parents were forced to quit it and transport themselves into Northumberland," probably to Alnwick to their brother-in-law, Thomas Percy, then Constable of Alnwick, under the Earl of Northumberland. "And fearing the air there might not agree with her, it being much ruder than her own, left her with a kinswoman of theirs, a widow of rare and proved virtue, by name Mrs. Ardington, of Harewell."

This lady was a daughter of Sir William Ingleby, of Ripley. She was a fervent Catholic, and well accustomed to the visits of pursuivants, and had even been in prison. So well known were her doings, that the Lord President Huntingdon thought it worth while to search her house himself. In 1586, or 1587,¹ he "went one night, with his man, to Ardington. They also entered the place wherein Dame Isabel Whitehead, a nun," of the Benedictine Priory of Arthington, dissolved in 1540, and granted to Archbishop Cranmer, for his youngest son, "lay there sick in bed. They stood over her with their naked swords and rapiers, and did threaten to kill her, unless she would tell where David Ingleby and Mr. Winsour," Mrs. Ardington's brother and son-in-law, "were. After

¹ Father Grene's MS. *Troubles*, series iii. p. 328, Father Morris.

this, she and Mrs. Ardington were, with others there, brought to York, and committed close prisoners severally to the Castle and other places." Mrs. Ardington "got her liberty after," but in 1594,² "on Easter Tuesday, he (the President) caused another search to be made for a priest, for it had been certified to him by his espials that Mr. David Ingleby, the gentleman's brother, and one whom the President loveth not, being a Catholic, and the Lady Anne Nevill," his wife, "were there." It was doubtless the piety and fervour of their cousin which induced Mary's parents to intrust the child they loved so well to her care.

"In this place God did this His beginning servant many graces which she herself understood not, yet corresponded with, not knowing. She took from the feast of our Blessed Lady her Assumption till her Sacred Nativity to prepare for her first Communion." Elsewhere it is said that she did this with extreme assiduity, not employing only one hour or two of the day, but whole days, seldom coming out of the chapel of the house. All other business was set aside; and even the servants knew this, and no one ventured to disturb her. The manuscript proceeds:

In which interim, near supper-time, whilst yet light, one of the servants came and told her that there was a gentleman at the gate from her father in great haste to speak with her. She, surprised with joy to hear of her father (whom she loved entirely dear), without reflection it was against the civil and ordinary way, ran without delay or reply. The

² Father Holtby's Narrative, *Troubles*, series iii. p. 104. For the account of this search, as characteristic of the times during Mary Ward's childhood, see Note IV.

man on horseback on one side of the pale, and she on the other, took out of his pocket a letter which he said was from her father, and he was to read it to her, but not to deliver it. The contents were that her father commanded her on his blessing, not to proceed in the way she was for matter of communicating (it was afterwards found her father never sent such a man or message), for he had a match in hand for her greatly advantageous, one of the Talbots of Grafton, and so took leave. She, as above said, loving so tenderly her dear and deserving father, felt pangs as of death to disobey him ; on the other side, not to communicate caused her such remorse and grief, as between both her life was inconsolable, nor would she discover it to any, partly out of a secrecy and closeness of nature, and greatly because she esteemed it against the reputation of the Catholic zeal her father ever had fame of, and oft her grief was such as she could not contain her tears. When urged to tell the cause, she made an excuse. In this time and after she never came to the chapel but she seemed to feel a loving reproach from God Almighty for her ingratitude. She continued in this conflict till she resolved to communicate the first opportunity she should have.

With regard to the proposed marriage, she resolved to take some future opportunity to discover to her father the desires which were strengthening within her of devoting herself to God in a single life. Having determined on both these steps, she regained her peace. Some communication from Harewell having passed with Marmaduke Ward, he before long wrote to Mary that he had neither sent any servant with a letter, nor thought of keeping her back from Communion, nor of her marrying against her will.³ Father Dominic Bissel relates this incident in his

³ *Gottseliges Leben*, Father T. Lohner, S.J. p. 24.

Latin Life; and with Father Lohner attributes it to a snare of the devil to prevent her from communicating.

The Talbot mentioned by the messenger was Sir George Talbot of Grafton, who became ninth Earl of Shrewsbury in 1617. "He was a scholar of some repute, and a great friend of Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria," who was subsequently Mary Ward's patron. A letter from Father Silisdon, in 1614, says of him that "Canterbury" (the Protestant Archbishop) "has used him very well, and entreated him, as one whose scholarship is famous, to make use of his library as it shall please him."⁴ He was a generous benefactor to the new Jesuit Novitiate established soon after that date at Liege, under Father John Gerard. He died unmarried in 1630.

The scene with the disguised horseman at the gate, and Mary receiving her first Communion at the age of thirteen, form two of the pictures of the Painted Life.

One of Mary's troubles while living with Mrs. Arington⁵ seems to have been that she was again asked in marriage when scarcely fourteen. The name of the suitor was Ralph Eldrington, another Northumbrian. The desire of her parents, and the urgent counsel of her friends, were both against her on this occasion. But of herself she writes:

Nor after twelve years old, did I ever see any that I did, or, for ought I know, could affect even, in way of

⁴ *Father Gerard's Life*, by Father Morris, S.J. Third Edition, pp. 485—6.

⁵ *Gottsdiges Leben*, p. 25; Painted Life, pict. 8.

marriage ; for it was ordinary with me to hate the party or parties, in such extremity (especially when the marriage was offered to myself), as could not stand with Christian charity, and this towards several and for divers years together.

What further happened concerning Ralph Eldrington's offer is thus related by Winefrid :

At thirteen she was again very much urged to marry, the person and estate being competently advantageous ; but her mind was so much another way, as the very grief had like to have put her into a mortal sickness, that for mere compassion her dear and noble-hearted father, who had the greatest tenderness imaginable for her, broke it off, esteeming it as aversion she had from that particular person, and that it would not be hard to find her her choice. But her Heavenly Father had higher designs in this His blessed child, and drew her by the ways He pleased and she knew not.

Upon this occasion Marmaduke Ward took his little daughter home for a time, but the state of Yorkshire was such that few Catholics were allowed to live in peace, and we very soon find Mary's parents returning to Northumberland to the quiet shelter which Alnwick Castle afforded them. The same reasons existed for leaving Mary in her native county as on their former departure, and she gives these, with others in addition, in resuming the history of her life at about her fifteenth year :

Being about fifteen years old, so near as I can guess, my parents had occasion to move to a much colder climate than that where ordinarily they lived, and I believe very likely they feared lest that air might endanger me, and therefore sent me to a kinswoman of my mother's, a Catholic

lady, on whom I was to attend, till either my parents returned, or some means of preferment should happen, which they hoped I would be sooner drawn unto, living abroad, than I had been at home (though I refused not those they offered forth of any desires to be religious, nor other reason, but because I could not affect them). This latter, as I have since thought, was the chief cause they sent me from them, though I remember the first was especially alleged, and both might well be, for they loved me dearly.

Here Mary in writing this fragment, as she tells us herself, some nineteen years afterwards, that is, in the year 1619 or 1620, cannot refrain from breaking out into thanksgiving to God for all His goodness to her in these younger years :

But, O Parent of parents, and Friend of all friends, Thy intent in thus disposing was different from this ; for here without entreaty Thou tookest me into Thy care; and by degrees led me from all else that at length I might see and settle my love in Thee. What had I ever done to please Thee? Or what was there in me wherewith to serve Thee? Much less could I ever deserve to be chosen by Thee. O happy begun freedom, the beginning of all my good, and more worth me at that time than the whole world besides. Had I never since hindered Thy will and working in me, what degrees of grace should I now have had. It is more than nineteen years since, and where as yet am I? My Jesus, forgive me, remember what Thou hast done for me, and whither Thou hast brought me, and for this excess of goodness and love let me no more hinder Thy will in me.

These relations of Mary's mother to whom she was sent when about fifteen years of age were Sir

Ralph and Lady Babthorpe of Osgodby and Babthorpe,⁶ near York; of whom (as Mary Ward lived for many years with them, and as their daughter and several of their grandchildren entered the Institute of Mary) some further account must here be given.

CHAPTER V.

Life at Babthorpe.

1600—1604.

THE Babthorpes¹ were an ancient Yorkshire family of some eighteen descents at the time when Mary Ward went to live with them. They were related to her by intermarriages among families connected with her, in more than one generation, beginning even a century before, through the Ryther family. Grace Babthorpe, Sir Ralph's wife, was a granddaughter of Sir William Ingleby, Mary's blood relation. After her husband's death, many years subsequently, she was professed as a nun at Louvain. Her courage and zeal for the faith are well depicted in the account of her examination before the Earl of Huntingdon, before being committed a prisoner to Sheriff Hutton Castle in 1592. He² "first examined her apart, and

⁶ Babthorpe was situate about ten miles to the south of York, between the Ouse and the Derwent. No remains of the mansion now exist.

¹ See "The Babthorpes of Babthorpe," *Troubles*, series i. p. 219, Father Morris, S.J., for their descent.

² *Troubles*, series i.

asked of her when she had gone to church? She answered him, 'Never.' He demanded her then how many Masses she had heard? She said, so many that she could not reckon them. At this he began to stamp. He lastly, seeing her remain so constant, made her the next day appear before the whole council table at York, where himself and their Bishop were chief." She remained in prison for two years. Sir Ralph Babthorpe had also been in prison for Mary, Queen of Scots,³ "and though upon his release he was bound in £4000 bond to bring all his family, both children and servants, to church, except only his wife, who they knew would not come, yet she not only kept her children every one of them, of which she had eight, from going to church, but all of them except one she caused to be christened at home by a priest." Of the regulation of their house, Father Pollard, who was probably living there during some part of Mary Ward's residence with them, further writes :

Our house I might rather count as a religious house than otherwise ; for though there lived in it three knights and their ladies [Sir Ralph, his married son, William, and his married daughter, Lady Palmes, and her husband, Sir George], the servants were Catholics. On the Sundays, we locked up the doors, and all came to Mass, and had our sermons, catechisms, and spiritual lessons, every Sunday and holyday. On the work days we had for the most part two Masses, and of them the one for the servants, at six of the clock in the morning, at which the gentlemen

³ Father Pollard's "Recollections of the Yorkshire Mission," *Troubles*, series iii. p. 469.

every one of them without fail, and the ladies if they were not sick, would, even in the midst of winter, of their own accord be present ; and the other we had at eight of the clock for those who were absent from the first. In the afternoon, at four o'clock, we had Evensong, and after that Matins, at which all the knights and their ladies, except extraordinary occasions did hinder them, would be present, and stay at their prayers all the time the priests were at Evensong and Matins. The most of them used daily some meditations and mental prayer, and all, at the least every fourteen days and great feasts, did confess and communicate ; and after supper every night, at nine of the clock, we had all together litanies, and so immediately to bed.

Of this pious household Mary was a member for nearly seven years. She was like a daughter of the house, and when they moved to some other place, as from Babthorpe to Osgodby, or elsewhere, she went with them, and she says that it was the most congenial to her of all the homes of her childhood. From her earliest years, Mary was certainly in an especial manner the child of Divine grace, but now it began more particularly to manifest itself in her. She gave herself up in earnest to virtue and piety in so perfect a manner, that by all who knew her she was considered a holy young girl, so circumspect was she in her speech, so temperate in her food, so modest in her whole deportment. Not that she was without passions to conquer, for so high-spirited a temperament could hardly be free by nature from some pride and irascibility. But she so mastered them that not only she became perfectly under her own control ; but finally she had such gentleness that she both maintained herself in interior peace, and also moved

others to the same gentleness. She continues her own account of herself thus :

This lady [Lady Babthorpe] was of more than ordinary virtue, and all things in the house so well ordered for the service of God, as led me by degrees to begin to serve Him, and within a little time I had some such taste of His love as made all that tended not some ways to His service of little value with me. I had much sensible devotion, and said many vocal prayers, was careful to come with due preparation to the sacraments (according to my skill at that time), very careful of modesty, and was besides so bashful, as that I could neither drink, nor be drunk unto, speak or look at any man without so much blushing as made my carriage rather disgraceful than gaining.

It is related of Mary that at this period she would not hear of sports and pastimes, but would contrive, without annoying others, to set herself apart in some retired place for prayer, or the reading of some spiritual book, and that she often was thus occupied until late, and even stole many quiet hours in the middle of the night for devotion. It was also remarked that she exercised herself the most in works of piety, which were the most contrary to her natural disposition, refusing herself also what was pleasing and agreeable, and doing what was opposed to the indulgence of the senses. She practised the virtue of temperance in a remarkable manner, and began now to allowance herself in what she ate, and considered it as a sin when she had eaten as much bread as she wanted, which she accuses herself of having often done, though she says that she never remembered having eaten against the admonitions of

her conscience. She also, even at this age, wore a penitential girdle, and used other exercises of penance, and she gave many hours to prayer in the chapel of the house.

To return to Winefrid Wigmore's narrative :

Her desires increasing, so did her practice of solid virtue in an eminent measure, so as her life was a perpetual prayer, her examens and frequenting the sacraments so exact, as even from one Communion she began preparing for another. For mortification her care was to find out what was most against her, and that to do. For example, finding in herself (as all noble hearts naturally do) great love for her own rank and degree by birth, when she had seen strangers who knew her not, nor could know the truth of what she did, she would truss up her sleeves, put on an apron, take a broom and basin of water in her hand, and so pass through the hall where the strangers were, that they might think she lived there in the nature of a servant, which many did ; and the poor devil has since served himself of it, with hope to lessen her, at least in the eyes of the foolish, who envy what they as little possess, as are capable to understand it.

Father Lohner says of Mary Ward : "Mary certainly sought earnestly after all virtues, but she appears to have had none so much at heart as humility." Of this victory over herself when as a young girl she passed herself as a servant before distinguished guests, he writes :

She was then so strengthened in humility, that it was not difficult to her afterwards to bear with a glad mind the great and indescribable contempt which she experienced from persons of all sorts. She had that, indeed, which St. Bernard desires for every truly humble man, that he

should much rather seek to be despised, and held to be bad and unworthy, than to be praised and highly esteemed. Her only wish was to be conformed to Christ, Who entered into His glory through contempt.

Mary Ward seems in her youth to have not only endeavoured to despise, but to be ashamed of, herself: she esteemed herself to be unworthy to think of herself at all; indeed, she believed that all her practices, even if they were praiseworthy and virtuous, were worthless and despicable because they had herself for their aim. The love and esteem of others, which were so plentifully showered upon her, she would sometimes in her humility rather attribute to sin in herself, as if she had laid herself out to obtain them, though at others she returned them with thanksgiving to God, their true source, as in the following passage:

I was so desirous to be esteemed and loved by all, that I sought this of every one, good and bad. My carriage, speech, and attire, was even noted for more than ordinary modest; so as I never by lightness in any kind gave occasion to any one's hurt, but these were so mixed and tempered with other perfections of nature and wholly by grace, as gained more even of some that were wicked than ever the contrary could have done. But here was wanting (through my only want to Thee, my God) that grace that so graceth all Thy gifts. God Almighty knows I never intended or sought anything that was bad in this, but inordinately to be thought worthy the praise and esteem of all, neither were those goods of my procuring, much less feigned by me. This only was mine, that in the use of them I thus offended Him that gave them, not only, as it may seem, for my own help to Heaven, but (which causeth extreme confusion) that many seeing this, might love them,

and by this link of affection, be more inclined to hear and observe her, whom He, that Goodness thus required, intended to make a means of their salvation.

Mary's severe judgment of herself stands out in strong contrast to what has just been related of the high hand with which she conquered any risings of pride of birth or station within. Another not less heroic instance of the manner in which she mastered her senses must be given. Such instances are found in the lives of saints only. Delicate ears must have patience. Winefrid Wigmore is our informant: "She being of herself in the highest degree neat and dainty, thought necessary to curb it, which she did by lying in bed with one of the maids that had the itch, and got it. To accomplish her mortification, she resolved never to do what might ease or cure her; but that Goodness, for Whose sake she did it, did that part, for in a short time she was perfectly well."

Such faithfulness to grace soon drew down upon Mary one still greater. At the age of fifteen or sixteen she first conceived the idea of becoming a religious. Winefrid Wigmore says: "At sixteen she earnestly desired religion in general; nothing then satisfying but what tended that way, she would retire herself alone in her chamber, with an old Catholic woman of the house, who told to her histories of religious." Mary writes herself:

I liked to keep company most with those of the house that I thought to be most virtuous; amongst whom there was especially one, a maid of great virtue (and in years), who looked to the chapel and such like businesses, with whom I loved to be and was much (and I trust in Jesus she hath

a great crown in Heaven for the good my soul gained by her means), for by some speeches of hers I found myself first moved to love a religious life. She never knew so much while she lived, but now my God reward her with that which is truly good, and is never to have end, and wherein it may be available to her, let her have a part in all that little I do that is good, who by Thy permission gave a beginning to it. Once as we were sitting sewing together in one room, she speaking of God, which was her ordinary talk, amongst other good stories, happened upon a true one of a religious nun, which fell forth in our country before the failure of religion.

This religious, continues Winefrid Wigmore, "having committed a frailty, was severely punished for it, which gave her (Mary) such light of the excellency of the religious state, as all her life she had a feeling of it, and upon occasions would speak to us according to that light."

Mary proceeds with her account of the impressions she received from the story thus :

- This so great a penance made the fault seem extreme, and withal I reflected that the like was neither rare, very disgraceful, nor much punished among worldlings; by which I immediately conceived a singular love and esteem for religious life, as a sanctuary where all might, and must be holy, and having through God's mere goodness as yet no impression of worldly affections, He gave me at that instant such a desire never to love any but Him, as I do not remember that ever since that time I have had the least inclining thought to the contrary, but on the other part have very many times seriously reflected, and as methought certainly perceived, if one man should or could be indued with the excellencies of all men together, yet were impos-

sible for me to content myself with the election of so little a good. Which light and love came wholly from Him, unto Whom I trust all that think this was a benefit will give the praise. For what belongs to me, I, that should best know, find cause for fear, that if God had given less, I should have left Him, or at least the best way to serve Him, and so either lost myself (being forth of my right way), or else by many falls and much missing, come home at length, yet so as for ever: and that infinitely less happy than that Goodness intended for me, Who of His mercy hath hitherto kept me in that pure and perfect way in which this holy woman helped to put me.

In another fragment of her autobiography, Mary writes further of the impulse of grace she then received, and how Almighty God confirmed it in her :

Betwixt fifteen and sixteen years of my age, so near as I can remember, it pleased our loving Lord to inspire me with a desire to lead a religious life, in general, for I had no instruction touching any particular Order, nor means to inform myself in that, living in a country infected with heresy, neither had I the curiosity to ask any one the difference between them. My loving Lord did so touch my heart with a longing desire to dedicate myself to His Divine service, as that I do not remember since any one moment in which I had not rather have suffered death than betaken myself to a worldly life. O my Lord and Saviour, permit me not to be proud of that which is certainly not mine, for if your Majesty had left me to myself, where had I now been? Nay, how have carried myself, this grace not restraining me? Oh, how much importeth good example and holy conversation, and how great harm have I caused by my contrary proceedings.

The scene described above by Mary herself, of her sitting at work in one of the rooms of the old manor-house at Babthorpe, forms an interesting subject for the brush of the unknown artist employed upon the Painted Life, and from that source we learn the name of the old servant, Margaret Garrett, and also that Mary had a companion and fellow-listener in the person of her young cousin, Barbara, then a girl of about eight years old, the youngest daughter of Sir Ralph Babthorpe.

CHAPTER VI.

A Vocation matured.

1600—1604.

NO sooner had the grace of the Divine calling to a more perfect state of life taken possession of Mary's heart than she set herself in good earnest faithfully to respond to it, seeking whatever appeared to her helpful to virtue and holiness, and casting aside every hindrance to their growth in her soul. With regard to exterior things, it has been said of her that she turned her cousin's house into a convent, as far as her own way of life was concerned, and in this the pious practices established in the household must have been very serviceable to her. We cannot here do better than make use of the short Italian autobiography¹

¹ In the Nymphenburg Archives.

which she wrote about the year 1627, commencing, when she was fifteen, by giving an account of what befell her, and of her own habits and practices, while residing in the Babthorpe family. She says, referring to the marriages pressed upon her :

During that time many of what the world esteems fortunate opportunities happened to me, against which when nothing in me could prevail, God Himself took it in hand and freed me by means considered by many more Divine than human. In these six years and as many months or more, living in the house of a relation of my mother's (in great measure because the retirement was more to my taste), I practised much prayer, some few fasts, and some austerities and internal and external mortifications (as far as I recollect on all the occasions that occurred), and acts of humility, such as that to those who did not know me, I appeared to be one of the domestics of the house. I showed great respect to my confessor, and used daily to thank God for having given me such an one, but from too much bashfulness, I did not confer with him on these things, nor even on my vocation to religion for a year or more after I had it.

I delighted in reading spiritual books, particularly those which treated of monastic life, and I spent much time by day and sometimes by night in this employment, and the Divine Goodness (perhaps to prevent in me a less useful exercise of the affections with which they abound) gave me at that time such light as to the beauty and perfection of the religious state, that in all that I have since seen or read in this kind, I have never seen anything exceed, if it equalled, the same. But this affection to the religious life was in general, for I had no inclination to any Order in particular, only I was resolved within myself to take the most strict and secluded, thinking and often saying, that as women did not know how to do good except to themselves (a penurious-

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ness which I resented enough even then) I would do in earnest what I did.

In a certain book, entitled *The Rules of Christian Life*, I found a way of distributing the days of the week for the exercise of divers virtues, and of dedicating the rooms of the house to various saints, [as to place several saints in such rooms of the house as I had most often occasion to come into, which I did and endeavoured to practise the virtue most eminent in the same saint.]²

Winefrid Wigmore says of this habit of Mary's: "Every room was dedicated to a special devotion and notes to herself to gain and keep the presence of God." Mary continues:

I applied myself so punctually to this practice, that many years afterwards returning into England for certain affairs, and coming to the said place to visit some relations, &c., the house appeared to me like a paradise, the same devotions and exercises presenting themselves at every step as I had before used them, so that I had not freedom of mind sufficient to perform certain civilities and other things more fitting to the time and occasion, which sentiment caused me confusion in remembering what I had done when I was less obliged. With this desire to be religious, my devotion to prayer and the exercise of several other virtues, I frequented the sacraments with extraordinary fervour, only confession was rather difficult to me, no otherwise than from my too great bashfulness and extreme repugnance to hear myself speak against myself, although in those years I did not find much to say. [After some time I began to think of a general confession, which I had read in some books (for I had little other instruction at that time than what I got by reading) was very profitable to one-

² English Autobiography.

self and pleasing to God, and so I was resolved to make one, though as I remember it was more than a year and a half before I could bring myself to do it, especially because all such priests as came then to the house were strangers and made no stay, the ordinary confessor being then at Rome about special business, some differences risen amongst the clergy of England, &c.]³

These few words of Mary's enable us, with great probability, to point to the Rev. John Mush as the priest whom she mentions as ordinary confessor at Babthorpe at that time, and consequently her own confessor also, of whom she says that she "daily thanked God for having given her such an one." This zealous priest and champion for the faith is more individually known to later generations by means of the beautiful biography penned by him of Margaret Clitherow⁴ the martyr, whose spiritual director he was. It can scarcely be doubted that Mary would have heard the touching history of the saintly heroine from his lips. We shall soon see with what results. But besides the direction of individual souls, John Mush was several times engaged in important public matters. He was often absent from Yorkshire, being deputed on more than one difficult mission, where wisdom and gentleness were scarcely less needed than

³ English Autobiography.

⁴ Margaret Clitherow, a devout Catholic in York, was charged with harbouring priests, which was her constant and highly-esteemed practice. She refused to answer the indictment when called to the bar. The judge accordingly sentenced her, and she was pressed to death between huge stones at York, March 25, 1586. The original manuscript of her biography still exists, written only a few years after her death, and has been published within the last few years in *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, series iii. by Rev. J. Morris, S.J.

personal holiness and a firm unflinching principle of action. The affairs entrusted to him were connected with the distractions consequent on the peculiar circumstances of the times which, made use of by its enemies, produced most injurious results to the Catholic cause. One of these missions now took him to Rome to obtain the decision of the Holy See as to the jurisdiction and powers of the newly-appointed archpriest Blackwell. Mush left England in September, 1601,⁵ and was occupied in Rome during nearly the whole of the year 1602, returning afterwards to labour afresh both for the Church and for individual souls in his own country. God blessed his undertakings mostly with success, nor is it a small thing to add concerning him, that he guided a martyr to her crown, and started one who was to be a confessor to the faith and a martyr in will, if not indeed, upon her rugged path. Mary Ward's expressions concerning him show a full appreciation of his merits and estimable qualities.

⁵ The five priests who went to Rome concerning the proceedings of the arch-priest were, Bagshawe, Bluet, Champney, Cecil, and Mush. Of these the first three had been in prison for many years, and were only liberated by Elizabeth to be sent on this mission. Cecil, who was a D.D. of the University of Paris, and subsequently it is to be feared an apostate and a spy, seems to have joined the rest in France of his own accord, rather than as being one of the appointed deputies. Of the five, Mush alone could be regarded as likely to have had his headquarters from time to time at Babthorpe, so far as to be considered the confessor there. That he was frequently absent is plain from Mary Ward's autobiography. Mush was subsequently appointed one of the assistants to the archpriest. After a long course of faithful labours, amidst danger and suffering, during which he was more than once in prison for the faith, he died a peaceful death in the year 1617.

Mary proceeds :

My confessor having gone to Rome for the decision of some controversies between the clergy and certain religious of England, in his absence I asked leave of one who knew me but little to prepare myself for a general confession (thinking that I ought not to apply myself to such a thing without leave from some priest), and I did not intend to make it to whoever I should propose this, that it might not be expected, but that I might remain at liberty until the last to make it or not make it, fearing that when the time should come I should not have courage to proceed with it. But this Father (who was of the Company of Jesus, a person much spoken of for sanctity of life) denied it to me, saying that it would not be useful to me then (fearing perhaps that I was scrupulous), although afterwards I had leave from another, and from the feast of St. Thomas before the Nativity of our Lord until the Vigil of the Resurrection I prepared myself, according to my little knowledge, and I made it (I think with profit) to my ordinary confessor, who had then returned from Rome [that is in the year 1603].

The above-named Father, who refused me this leave, gave me and recommended to me, instead of making a general confession, to read a certain book entitled "The Spiritual Combat" (*Il Combattimento Spirituale*), which book was, so to speak, the best master and instructor that I have had in spiritual exercises for many years, and one perhaps of the greatest helps which until now I have had in the way of perfection.

The name of the book suggests the question whether this might not have been Mary Ward's first introduction to Father John Gerard? The priest in question could hardly have been Father Holtby, who, by what Mary afterwards says, must already have been

her confessor for two or three years, and besides she says that only "priests who were strangers" came to the house at this time. Father Gerard resided much during the period of which we are speaking with Mrs. Vaux, at Harrowden, Northamptonshire, and he says in his life, that he had there "several excellent horses for missionary journeys," and that he "frequently made excursions" thence. He was the first translator of Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat* into English,⁶ which was printed afterwards in London and at Rouen, 1613. Mary must have been scholar enough to have read it in the original Italian or in Latin at this time, unless a manuscript copy of the translation was put into her hands. Winefrid Wigmore's English manuscript calls the book by another name. She says, "The Divine Providence disposed that she should light on a discreet confessor, who, finding her at that time inclining to scrupulosity, would not permit her" (to make the general confession she desired), "but gave her that little but excellent book, *The Spiritual Conflict*,⁷ and bid her read and practise that little book in place of her general confession, which this divine scholar so punctually performed as she made it the foundation of her whole spiritual life, and had it by heart, as to the very last hour of her life she could tell without looking on the book the substance of every chapter."

The profit which Mary soon derived from the

⁶ Dr. Oliver's *Collectanea*. Scupoli's work was not printed in Italian until after his death in 1610.

⁷ The French copy of Winefrid's manuscript names the work as *Le Combat Spirituel*.

study of this work is manifest by what she further writes :

From what I found in this book and sought to follow, I was, so to speak, almost always actually in prayer (which I did not confide to any one for the reason above said) [*i.e.*, her timidity], and after some time of this fervent practice, there occurred such a multitude of manners and ways of producing various acts of virtue, and this with such eagerness, that what at first was easy and pleasing, became on a sudden difficult and wearisome, and with the additional scruple that I did not obey good inspirations, not doing all which was presented to my thoughts as good, (a thing impossible from their being so many and so different). And here I found myself in some perplexity, not being inclined to confer on these things with others, and the way in which I naturally went was rather with latitude than strictness, but God compassionated my simplicity, and in this anxiety gave me courage to reason in this manner with myself : These things are not of obligation but of devotion, and God is not pleased with certain acts made thus by constraint and to acquire one's own quiet, therefore I will do these things with love and freedom or leave them alone. And this I began, sometimes doing, at other times omitting the said devotions, directing both the one and the other to the better pleasing God, which doing, in a short space my usual peace of mind returned, and the easy use of these exercises, an experience which has much helped me since in other occurrences of this nature.

"An excellent example," says one of Mary's biographers, "for the scrupulous, who desire commonly to do more than any one can do, and there is usually confession upon confession, and not seldom confession of more than is in the thing itself. If such

are self-willed and indocile, they mercilessly torment themselves and their confessor, and pass the best time of their life, when they could do good, in an idle chase after 'gnats,' not unlike the Emperor Domitian, who shot away his golden arrows and lance at flies. I know not whether one ought most to laugh or cry over them."

To return to Mary's general confession. "In reading Mary Ward's manuscripts," writes the same biographer, "we always find that she speaks of herself as a great sinner, that she desires unceasingly to atone for her past sins, and that her confessions were never ending. But it is probable that she never lost her baptismal grace, for it is certain that in the general confession which she made about the thirtieth year of her age, and wrote down at the desire of her confessor, there is scarcely to be found what can be called a voluntary, deliberate, venial sin, much less a mortal sin. That in her youth she ate meat on a fast day, or ate one or two more pieces of bread than she believed were necessary, or had eaten for her pleasure what was not wholesome, that about twenty times she had remained with her companions instead of going to bed at the appointed time, that she disliked the man who asked her in marriage—these were about the greatest sins she had committed in her early years, and such little, trifling sins she afterwards confessed a thousand times."

"After this general confession was made," Mary writes in her English fragments, "with the best preparation I could (for I examined, as I remember, divers times every day, from St. Thomas his day before Christmas, till

Easter eve), my longing to be a religious increased." And here with her usual fear of presumption she adds, "but how much good shall I say of myself, having forgot the bad I did in this time. Thou knowest, O Lord, my heart, and that I do this by commandment, and that my only care is to tell true and to set down all I can call to remembrance, good and bad."

One other feature of Mary's spiritual life, of which her general confession was partly the fruit, must here be added: "She was wont also to spend much time in reading the lives of saints, particularly martyrs, which so inflamed her well-prepared heart as nothing could satisfy her but a living or dying martyrdom; whence her heart, filled with heavenly fervour, was ardently enkindled with the fire of Divine love, so that the thoughts which formed her greatest delight were those of some kind of martyrdom. In some of these fervours she would needs make a general confession." The desire for martyrdom, which had taken such a deep hold on Mary, and which was for four years the passion of her soul, influencing and governing her whole interior life, if it first arose from reading such biographies, must have had plenty of food in the occurrences of her every-day life, and in the conversation which went on around her concerning events then actually passing in Yorkshire. There is no reason for disbelieving that among these lives the history of Margaret Clitherow would have had a prominent place. Mary was much at Ripley Castle in those days, and not a visit there but must have recalled that dauntless soul visibly to her imagination, in company with her own martyred kinsman, Francis

Ingleby, brother of Sir William, the priest for sheltering whom Margaret had suffered. Francis was executed at York, three months after Margaret Clitherow, in 1586, "barely for being a priest," says Bishop Challoner,⁸ having laboured, with great fruit, for only two years. Among Mary's other near relations also, there were numbers who had already swelled the goodly company of confessors to the faith, and who were continually called upon to give fresh proofs of their devotion. Out of the many sufferers of the period, whose courage and love of God had set her own heart on fire, there were especially two priests, Edward Thwing and Robert Middleton, who had lately given up their lives at Lancaster in 1600 and 1601, when Mary was fifteen and sixteen, both more or less connected with her family. Such examples could not be lost upon her.

With a character ardent and generous such as hers, full of devotion to the Catholic faith, the few words found in her Italian autobiography, describing her state of mind at this time, will not therefore excite surprise: "I had during these years burning desires to be a martyr, and my mind was for a long time together fixed upon that happy course; the sufferings of the martyrs appeared to me delightful for attaining to so great a good, and my favourite thoughts were how? and when?" As Mary thus writes more than twenty-five years afterwards, her heart again fires up and she adds:

And notwithstanding my many sins, infinite ingratitude, and most evil correspondence to so many graces received

⁸ *Missionary Priests*, part i. p. 122.

from that time until now, the same boundless goodness grants me yet the hope of attaining one day to that happiness.

The victim still remained bound and as ready for sacrifice as she was in all the untried self-devotion and fervour of youth at sixteen, and long and weary years of suffering had given good proof that the holocaust was not one of imagination only. Mary had learned perhaps that martyrdom was a word of many meanings, but no sooner were the ardent longings of her younger years recalled to memory, than she exclaimed once more, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." Those longings had indeed been day and night, we are told, to shed her blood in order to gain the martyrs' crown. Her whole soul was bent on offering up her life to God for the faith, and she sought this grace from Him at the same time by fervent prayers. And He who had bestowed the love which inspired them, deigned Himself to direct those desires to the end for which they were permitted by manifesting His will to her in His own way. Mary continues:

But through certain occurrences it pleased God for the present to moderate the vehemence of these aspirations, in order, as I believe, that I might take breath and apply myself to follow my vocation to the religious life.

We should have remained in ignorance what these occurrences were of which Mary thus modestly writes, but for the series of pictures in the Painted Life. Two of these are devoted to the present subject. In one of them Mary, over-

taken by an ecstasy while reading the life of some martyr, receives, by an infused light from Almighty God, the knowledge that what He requires and has in store for her is spiritual rather than bodily martyrdom. The light brought interior peace with it, as all such light does, and her energies were henceforth directed to attain to a greater perfection in her spiritual course, while her soul grew calmer.

Let us here pause, and take a glance for a moment at what Mary's spiritual state really was at this period of her life—namely, from her sixteenth to her twentieth year. To sum up, then, all we have learned in few words, Mary lived a life of continual prayer and the practice of the presence of God. She aimed at the exercise of the most exalted virtues ; none were excluded, but her favourite one was that of humility, and she therefore performed even heroic acts of humiliation and self-contempt. Her acts of external mortification were scarcely inferior in merit, and to these she added the internal exercise of that virtue, carried out with a perfection attained by few who have not fought an almost life-long, weary strife with nature and with self. She fasted and used many other severe corporal austerities, frequented the sacraments with extreme fervour and careful preparation, and spent much time in spiritual reading. She shunned all the pleasures usually sought for in youth, and endeavoured to live in silence and recollection, and, as far as her circumstances permitted, in solitude—her aim in all being to prepare herself for that religious order (though which it should be she did not know) in which the severest kind of life was led,

and which, being the most separated from the world, was the most closely united to God.

But to speak, finally, of the special graces bestowed upon Mary by God. If her humility was of the heroic order, the Divine love which ruled over her soul was scarcely less so, since it had not only dried up the springs of venial sin and imperfections within, but consumed her with desires to suffer and die in His honour. One other gift may be added, not always an ordinary one even with saints. Almighty God Himself guided her interiorly, and guarded her thus from dangers apt to beset those who enter the more exalted ways of perfection. If we look at this gift with human eyes, we may trace its origin to two secondary causes. Meantime, it gives the last touch of almost unearthly beauty to the pure, fervent, and faithful life with God which we have been considering—namely, its entire hiddenness with Him alone. External guides and ordinary means of grace were rare in those troublous days, but the Divine Spirit was faithful to His Church, and did not only, by extraordinary means, preserve many a soul from perishing, but in the same way bestowed individual culture and unusual graces on His chosen ones. And so it was that fair flowers and fruit were still gathered in profusion and laid up in Paradise, from that once favoured garden of England, all blasted and desolate as it had become from the wild storms of heresy and persecution which were raging there.

Mary had to endure like others the want of opportunity to obtain human guidance, but she laboured besides under another personal difficulty, which, as

she several times acknowledges, produced almost similar results. The ordinary confessor was often absent, strange priests came and went after but short stay, and Father Holtby's visits were infrequent. But, what was as fatal, when she wished for occasion came, Mary's lips were closed concerning many of her spiritual needs, through great timidity of disposition, and the consequence was that she suffered and struggled on in silence. Doubtless this was also permitted for wise and hidden ends, but so it happened that, unless by some special intervention on His side, a great part of what God was working in her soul was known only to Him. It was through one of these interventions, or, in common parlance, by accident, that Mary's vocation to religion became known to one of the two priests, John Mush or Father Holtby, whom she seems indifferently to name as "my confessor." She thus describes what occurred :

To go forward as I am commanded, my desire to religion daily increased in such sort as that I took no delight in anyone's company except such as were good, nor did their conversation please me except it were spiritual. Yet I did not so much as acquaint my confessor with my desires for a year and a half after,⁹ about which time he perceived my inclination rather by some tears which I could not forbear, by the occasion of some speeches which then he uttered in commendation of some religious women in those

⁹ English Autobiography, Nymphenburg Papers. It should be more likely two years and a half, for by her Italian Autobiography, Mary made her general confession at Easter, about a year and a half after her first call to religion. The account here given is a fragment hastily written on a scrap of paper, apparently at some odd minute of time, which may explain the reason of the discrepancy.

countries where such piety was permitted. O goodness of God, I can never give thanks sufficient for this benefit, nor am able to express the joy of spirit which then I felt after I had opened my mind and perceived him inclined to further me in that course. This discourse of myself happened on an Ascension Day after supper, before which time, for the space of ten weeks together, I had no means to come to the sacraments, in which space the devil tempted me exceedingly, and I perceived not his drift. I remember I used extraordinary preparation for the space, as I think, of ten days before the said Ascension, but what devotion I used in particular I have forgotten, except some short speeches of desire of His presence.

Obedience to those who had the care of her soul was one of Mary's brightest virtues, as we shall see in time to come, and her simple joy on this occasion amply shows that it was no lack of desire for its exercise which had made her thus reticent. A blessing rested on the manifestation of her secret aspirations, for it pleased God again to confirm her in them by another infused light which she received some time after. She had learned that He required the martyrdom of spiritual perfection from her, and to be "crucified with Christ" in the religious state was now all her aim. But times of fervour come and go. In some interval of dryness or desolation, Mary began to fear that she was suffering through her own tepidity and that she had grown cold in the love of God, because she no longer experienced the same burning desire to shed her blood, but was seeking rather a life in His service than to die for His honour. Our Lord again comforted and instructed her by the second "occurrence" which she herself refers to and

which has been noticed above, as revealed to us in the Painted Life. Mary fled to her usual refuge in trouble, the feet of our Lord, and there poured forth her anxieties. Once more the heavenly light streamed into her soul, bringing strength and consolation with it, and she was given intellectually to understand that the spiritual martyrdom God required was comprised in a perfect fulfilment of the three evangelical counsels in the religious state.

We have now brought Mary's spiritual history to within a few months of the first great crisis of her life, and to her twentieth year. Rare and costly gems are frequently placed in some beautifully decorated casket, whose workmanship but adds to their charm. Some persons may then anxiously enquire what was the outer casket in human form which shrouded graces and virtues so shining as those we have been contemplating? And who were those privileged to stand around and catch some few rays of their hidden beauty? In answer to the first of these questions, we hear of Mary's personal appearance during these years, that she was very beautiful, and that the modesty and reserve of her demeanour were as great as her beauty. In spite of her reticence and her efforts to conceal her doings, the holiness of her life was well known, yet at the same time her sweetness and affability drew all hearts to her, and even won the careless or bad to better courses. Of her own parents and sisters Mary seems to have seen little during her girlhood, but in the saintly Lady Babthorpe she had a congenial companion and friend. For the rest, the Yorkshire Catholics were at this period almost

like one great family. Already united by the innumerable intermarriages, which connected them one with the other from generation to generation, the common bond of suffering in the holy cause, which so many of them nobly defended, must doubly have strengthened the tie which bound them together. We are told that Mary "was much loved by a kinsman of hers, Sir William Ingleby, of Ripley, whither he often invited her, and where she gave such excellent example, as old servants of that house keep things given them by her as holy. A gentleman who had an ivory image given him by a dependant of Sir William Ingleby, told myself this particular. Much more of this nature might be said of the particular veneration she was in, even to our first coming into the north, especially by the Mallorys, Inglebys, Plumptions, and Middeltons." These families were all related in various ways to Mary Ward. The Mallorys, of Studley, we have already heard of. Of the Plumptions, besides other previous intermarriages, Sir Edward Plumpton had married Frances Arthington, the daughter of the relative with whom Mary had lived when her parents fled to Northumberland. The Middeltons,¹⁰ a very ancient family, were equally connected with her in more than one generation, a connection to which another link was added during her own life-time by the marriage of Sir Peter Middelton, of Middelton, to the daughter of David Ingleby and Lady Anne Neville. The Inglebys were related to her through the Mallorys as well as through other

¹⁰ The ancestors of the present family of Middeltons of Stockeld and Middelton, also of that of Lord Herries of Maxwell.

sources, Sir William Ingleby, the father of Sir William just mentioned, having married Anne, daughter of Sir William Mallory. Babthorpe being Mary's home, the connection of its owners with all these families brought her doubtless into continual contact with them, besides many others belonging to Yorkshire, who were also their and her relations, such as the Vavasours, Cholmelys, Constables, Gascoignes, all names noted for faithful adhesion to the Catholic faith. Nor can we wonder at the love and veneration with which she was universally regarded. In some cases we shall find that these sentiments were no passing enthusiasm of the moment, but which endured to the end of her life and survived her.

CHAPTER VII.

Edmund Neville.

1605.

HAVING reached her twentieth year, Mary no longer made any secret of her intention of becoming a religious, but allowed it to be clearly seen in all her exterior doings. Both Sir Ralph and Lady Babthorpe, and their youngest daughter Barbara, then a girl of thirteen, became aware of the fact. Others, observing her devout and almost conventual manner of life, spoke of it even before she did so herself, and prognosticated her speedy departure abroad, as it was impossible to enter a convent in England. No sooner, however, did Mary disclose her determination, than an universal opposition was raised. She was too much loved to be parted with so easily, and every member of the household, even to the servants, had some good reason to urge against it.

She says herself:

From my exterior and my application to the exercises most fitting for that state, it was generally known that I was resolved to leave England for that purpose. Of all my relations and friends, both secular and spiritual, not one was excepted, as far as I recollect, who did not more or less dissuade me from taking up that state of life, being

wont, among other reasons they alleged, to decide that my complexion was not fit for such a way of living, especially in a severe order, upon which they knew that I was bent, and the danger that I might be forced to return to the world through the failure of my bodily powers, was the only thing among all they said which made any impression upon me.

“So,” says one of her early biographers, “is it ever, when a favourite child, considered promising by the world, desires the religious state : every friend, companion, and acquaintance knows how to put in his word, from the highest to the lowest—all, even to the coachman and footboy, can sing their little song against religious orders. They are a ‘a cursed land,’ they say, ‘a land which devours its inhabitants.’ But if, on the contrary, one, ill-favoured and little thought of by the world, seeks to go into some convent, then every one sings a different little song : they know not how sufficiently to praise nuns ; what a beautiful, pure, pious, and peaceful life they lead ! there is nothing they would sooner be than a nun ; the religious state then is nothing but ‘a land of promise, a land full of sweetest milk and honey.’”

Mary had to undergo the first of these experiences in large measure, and though she little regarded all other remonstrances, yet the last and universal cry, that her constitution was too delicate for a cloister, struck home to her. What, then, was she to do ? Was she only, after all, indulging presumptuous desires which could never be fulfilled ? Once more Almighty God did not leave her in her difficulty, “for she betook herself night and day to prayer, penances, spiritual reading, and other pious works, to obtain

light from Him, and did not slacken until her petition was granted, and she received the knowledge of His Divine Will, together with interior peace of heart."¹ Mary, omitting her own share of merit in the matter, tells only what God's goodness did for her.

Being in some distress from this reason [the delicacy of her constitution urged by her friends], that sentence occurred to my mind, *Quærite primum Regnum Dei*, &c., when suddenly the burden was raised from off me, and I had, as one may say, a certainty, that if I did my part in embracing the better portion, and preferring before all the honour and service of God, His Divine goodness would supply for every deficiency of mine, &c., and the same sentence, in the sense which I then understood, has encouraged me at other times in certain things to all appearance impossible.

Mary's fears were gone, and she was armed for the final struggle, which she must have felt was not far distant.

It is not clear at what period Mary first disclosed her desire of being a nun to her father. Winefrid Wigmore says: "She took opportunity to make known to her dear father her great desires to be religious and to have his permission, but he on no terms would hear of it." She probably spoke of it to him many times, for the manuscript adds afterwards: "But this endeavouring for her father's good will lasted seven years, with her no small toil, anxiety, conflict, prayers, and penances." By the end of that time her desires had grown into a fixed purpose, well-known to all around her as she made no attempt

¹ *Gottseliges Leben*, Father T. Lohner, S.J., p. 29.

to conceal it, when "in the last year of her conflict" an unlooked-for difficulty came in her way. "That no trial might be wanting, came to her acquaintance a nobleman and a Catholic, in virtues and qualities complete, far out of her thought (which was wholly in God), who sought her in marriage, but so liked and approved by all, as each one vehemently urged her with weighty reasons to accede to it." Every one gave her black looks, says another biographer, regarding her conventual tendencies, and "it was time (it appeared to her) to effect her design of becoming a religious, and she therefore made it known to her father."

Meantime Marmaduke Ward had been himself planning an interview which was not less desired by him than by his daughter. It could have been at occasional intervals only that they had met since his flight into Northumberland in 1597 or '98. In the year 1604, the Lord President of the North left York in consequence of the plague which broke out there, and held his court at Ripon. It was on this occasion, probably, that Marmaduke's name appears in a public list of recusants² which was made there in that year, together with that of his wife, which is wrongly given as Elizabeth. From the absence of the Council from York, the neighbourhood of that city may have become less dangerous, for it must have been in the following year that Marmaduke arrived at Babthorpe to see his daughter. He had been informed by others of the rejected suitor and of her intentions, and came prepared to put an

² Peacock's *Yorkshire Catholics*, p. 43.

end to the latter. She was in all her doings already a nun, he was told, and would soon leave England altogether. Mary continues :

My father therefore came in person to the place where I was, and most peremptorily prohibited me from departing out of England without his leave and express order, to which command I made no resistance either by word or sign (for I loved him extremely, and had not the heart to say anything to him which would grieve him), but at the same moment I was most firmly resolved to observe nothing less than his precept, but to set out immediately and never see him again, which [however she adds] God did not permit that I should do.

Mary's friend Winefrid, who must often have heard her relate the history of her early troubles, adds a little more and tells us the source of her strength at this trying moment. She says that Mary "very humbly intreated her father to give her his permission to become a religious, but that he would in no way hear of it. This refusal gave her no pain : it was not now with her as it had been, having learned to follow the counsel of her Heavenly Father, and gained such courage as little to value the words, before so dear and powerful, that they not at all daunted her or gave her the least difficulty in this her Divine undertaking. She generously resolved to embrace the first opportunity to pass the seas, and said in herself, 'I will see him no more,' and that with joy, so as what had been above thousands of worlds dear to her, the obedience to her father, when in balance with her best pleasing God, was as nothing."

But Marmaduke Ward's plans for his daughter were entirely at variance with her own, and were not so easily set aside. We may as well leave her for a time, and consider what we can learn about the "Catholic nobleman" of whom Winefrid Wigmore speaks, and the designs of Marmaduke in his regard.

Edmund, or Edward Neville, was born in 1563, and had therefore attained, at the present period, the mature age of forty-three years. His parents were probably Sir John Neville of Leversedge and his second wife, Beatrice, daughter of Henry Browne. Sir John's property was confiscated by Queen Elizabeth for the part he took in the rebellion in the North of 1569, and he was driven into exile, leaving eight children without any means of support. Edmund was universally beloved, and noted for great sweetness of manner. He was never a Protestant, but he was a schismatic until his twenty-eighth year—that is, he attended perforce and against his conscience the State services—and his conversion, he said himself, was effected by the Holy Spirit without any one's persuasion. From that time his life was of the same type with that of numbers in England, who for nearly a century and a half, being deprived of their inheritance by the persecuting laws, remained constant to their religion. Practising it in secret, they had to run a thousand risks of imprisonment and death, and to be the helpless witnesses of the sufferings of others for the faith, while they maintained themselves with difficulty, every profession suitable to those of gentle birth being closed to Catholics by the same cruel system of legislation.

In such a condition, a matrimonial alliance with Edmund Neville did not appear to offer even a competency, much less any brilliant prospect to Mary. But Neville was a man "of great expectations," and as such, Marmaduke Ward looked upon him, as many parents of the present day would have done, with a favourable eye. From Father Lohner's and Bissel's Biographies it appears that he was heir to the Westmoreland title and estates. He was, in fact, seventh³ Earl of Westmoreland *de jure*, being the nearest male heir of Charles, the sixth Earl, attainted for his share in the rising in the North in favour of Mary Queen of Scots. Earl Charles had died in Flanders in 1601. The estates which he had forfeited, through his unsuccessful devotion to Queen Mary and the Catholic cause, were of no mean value, including princely castles and domains in the northern counties, such as Brancepeth, Raby,⁴ Middleham, and Naworth, whose ruins still testify to the power and exalted position of their former owners, who possessed a corresponding fortune for their maintenance. When he went into exile, the attainted Earl told the King of Spain, in a petition which he presented to him, that his estates in England were worth £150,000 a year, and one of

³ Edmund Neville was descended from a brother of the third Earl, while the other competitors, one of whom even called himself Earl of Westmoreland in James's reign, were descendants of the younger sons of the first Earl.

⁴ Of an earlier day we read—

Seven hundred knights, retainers all
Of Neville, at their master's call
Had sate together in Raby hall.

(Wordsworth's *White Doe of Rylstone*.)

the competitors for the forfeited title, in hopes of being favourably heard, had thought it well worth while to offer £50,000 out of them to the crown as a bribe. Ready money had as great attractions to royalty in those days, as forfeited estates to grasping courtiers. The Earl of Northumberland had regained his title by the loss of a part of his ancestral territories: why should not Edmund Neville regain his at a like cost, especially with that Earl's assistance, which Marmaduke could well reckon on throwing into the scale? Northumberland was high in Court favour at the time, in those early years of the reign of James, before the Gunpowder Plot. Though the King had belied the promises which he had made to the Catholics upon his accession, it was still hoped that he would look with a favourable eye on the heirs of those who had suffered so deeply in his mother's cause, as had Earl Charles. In his advice to his son, James had raised their hopes by saying that he had found those the most true and trusty to himself who had been faithful followers of hers. If utter ruin in Queen Mary's behalf was a proof of fidelity, certainly few could plead with better reason than Edmund Neville.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Penal Laws.

THE father of Mary Ward cannot be blamed for seeking what may be well called so dazzling a position for his daughter, as though he were attempting to place her out of her proper sphere. The Wards had for generations intermarried with the best blood in the county, such as the Musgraves, the Gascoignes, and the Nortons, and were already connected in various ways with the family of the Nevilles, as well as with that of the Percys. Nor must Marmaduke Ward be deprived of what is justly his due. Besides the temporal advancement of his daughter, whom, as we have heard, he tenderly loved, and, fervent Catholic as he was, perhaps even before it, he felt that the good to be gained to the cause of religion by the restoration of the Westmoreland title and estates to Edmund Neville, and their preservation for Catholic heirs, would be enormous. A glance at the state of things in England, above all in the north, where the interest of the Neville family principally lay, will abundantly show this.

The Catholics had now for half a century been groaning under the burden of the persecuting sta-

tutes, which had gradually increased in severity. Who can adequately describe the state of domestic misery which these statutes entailed upon them? Some among them, in despair of a better state of things, had gone to live abroad; but such a step was not in the power of by far the larger number, even of the more opulent. To these, therefore, nothing was left but the hard choice of conforming to the laws, or of facing death, the loss of their whole property, and imprisonment for life, and, for what were esteemed less offences, confinement for shorter periods and heavy fines, the frequent infliction of which reduced many to beggary. Priests had no alternative. Death was the punishment assigned to them by law, although, in many instances, as a matter of policy, this was changed into imprisonment or banishment; while those who sheltered and assisted them were treated as felons. To hear Mass, receive the sacraments, educate children as Catholics, or send them abroad for the purpose, even to wear or possess rosaries, crosses, Agnus' Dei, and such like sacred objects, were punishable with the loss of all their property or perpetual imprisonment, sometimes with both. It was death to persuade another to become a Catholic. Children educated abroad forfeited their inheritance to the next heir who would conform to the laws. The life of a Catholic who was faithful to his conscience was one of daily and constant alarm and solicitude. He was at the mercy of every ill wisher or designing person: a discontented tenant, an evil-disposed servant, had him in their power; he was liable to be incessantly watched, and at any

moment to be hurried off before the tribunals, and to be condemned to heavy fines, imprisonment—well, if it were not to death—on the most insufficient and trifling testimony.

But there were other cleverly contrived engines of oppression, which in themselves utterly destroyed the peace and well-being of the Catholic family, either rich or poor, one of which at least was a powerful, if it were a petty, aid in rooting up the Catholic religion, and turning England into a Protestant country. This latter was the law enforcing attendance, baptism, and communion in the Protestant churches. The penalty at first was 12*d.* for each Sunday, but in 1586, finding that "Catholics did upon conscience retire themselves from going more than before," it was increased to £20 a month. Afterwards "the new angariation and pressure then first brought up that men should be bound to pay for their wyves that were recusants" £10 extra, and the same for the children, and £10 for the servants, thirteen months moreover being reckoned in the year. In 1606, it was increased to £10 for each person. Those who were too poor to be touched by this enactment had two-thirds of their goods taken. Under this statute the poor suffered terribly. Many went to prison rather than pay. It was a good opportunity for the cruelty of pursuivants and underlings. We read of "the coverlets and blankets taken from the beds" in the cottages, the beds themselves and the other furniture, even "cloth, spun to clothe the children for the winter," sometimes "all their goods" seized, if better off, the cow driven away,

and the owners forced to go begging. On one occasion, "the vestry of a Protestant church was almost filled with pots, pans, pewter, and household stuff" carried off. On another the milk on the fire, begged by a starving man, in a cottage all but stripped, was poured away and the pan taken. These are instances out of thousands such. How deep the faith still lay in the hearts of some of the English poor may be seen by their simple but brave answers before their judges at such times. Thus we read, in depositions at York, 1576,¹ a tailor's wife "sayeth she cometh not to the church because there is neither altar nor sacrifice." A locksmith, "because it is not the Catholic church, for there is neither priest, altar, nor sacraments." His wife, "her conscience will not serve her, because there is not the sacrament hung up, nor other things as hath been aforetime." Their numbers may be exemplified by the facts that in a list of recusants² refusing to go Church in 1605, out of just two thousand named in it, fifty only are of the rank of gentlemen.

For the richer of the population, the value of money, being about four times what it is now, few incomes would bear the heavier penalty, the price at which they were to buy peace of conscience. But this law gave a pretext besides, for eliciting the proof of recusancy and for bringing down upon them all which that accusation involved, especially the incessant search of their dwellings, the second evil to which we have alluded. An Englishman's, or rather a Catholic's home, was certainly in those days not

¹ *Troubles*, series iii. p. 248.

² P.R.O. "Recusant Papers."

his castle. Any hour of the day or night, he might be visited by a magistrate at the head of an armed mob, or worse still by pursuivants, with their band of attendants, too well known as a most degraded, mercenary, unscrupulous, and cruel set of men, many of them apostates, who made a living of their evil gains. The doors would be burst open and the pursuivants in separate parties would "run up the stairs and into the chambers with their drawn swords, enough to drive the weaker sort of women and children out of their wits." They would then ransack every room, and search and interrogate every person, if at night, turning them out of bed, under the plea that superstitious objects might be hidden there, the tapestry would be torn down, the walls pierced, the flooring torn up, locks forced, closets, drawers, coffers rifled. Remonstrances only made them more insolent. They recklessly wasted and destroyed whatever was in their way, and finally would carry off private letters, plate, and anything valuable which they found, besides all else they fancied, even "beds, tables, clothes, chests, trunks, and especially money. If they find the master of the house," says a contemporary,³ "they thrust the infamous oath of supremacy upon him, and if he refuses to take it, they carry him off to the nearest gaol, there in poverty and chains, in darkness and squalor, in hunger and nakedness, *vel ducat vitam, vel animam agat*. The times of Elizabeth, although most cruel, were the mildest and happiest in comparison of those

³ Father Coffin, S.J., Stonyhurst Manuscripts, *Anglia*, vol. iii. n. 103.

of James the First." "Not only in the shires and provinces abroad," writes another,⁴ "but even in London itself, and in the eyes of the Court, the violence and insolency of continual searches grew to be such as was intolerable: no night passing commonly, but that soldiers and catchpoles break into quiet men's houses, when they were asleep; and not only carried their persons into prisons at their pleasure, except they would bribe excessively, but whatsoever liked them best besides in the house."

Sometimes these barbarous inroads were directed against single houses or individuals at the pursuivant's choice, at others they were sudden organized attacks upon all the Catholics through whole districts, upon the slightest pretexts. Thus the Protestant Bishop of Hereford writes to Cecil on June, 1605,⁵ that "upon Wednesday last at evening, Sir James Scudamore" and other "justices of peace, with such aid as I could give them, went unto the Darren and other places adjoining to make search and apprehend Jesuits and priests, their abettors and receivers certain days before being riotously abroad with weapons, and did make diligent search, all that night and day following, from village to village, from house to house, about thirty miles compass, near the confines of Monmouthshire, where they found altars, images, books of superstition, relics of idolatry, but left all desolate of men and women. Except here or there an aged woman or a child, all were fled into Wales, and but one man apprehended: all that circuit of

⁴ Parsons' *Judgment of a Catholic Englishman*, 8vo. 1608. p. 43.

⁵ "Recusant Papers," P.R.O.

rude barbarous people carried headlong into these desperate courses by priests (whereof there is great store) and principal gentlemen, lords of towns and manors there. They are all fled into woods, and there they will lurk until the assizes be past." Father Holtby also relates at an earlier date:⁶ "This year, being the year of our Lord 1593, upon the 1st of February, at night, until the next day at nine of the clock, being Candlemas Day, there was a general search made for Catholics all over Yorkshire, Richmondshire, Cleveland, the bishopric of Durham, and Northumberland, wherein all the Justices of Peace, and others of authority, with such as favoured the heretics' faction, together with the ministers themselves, did flock together, entering the houses of the Catholics and all such as were suspected to favour their cause, in so great numbers that it is hard to say how many were abroad that night in searching. For there came to some houses above an hundred or seven score persons to search. Myself and my brother John escaped very narrowly. They got beads and books in divers places, and many were forced to forsake their homes to escape the danger: yet did they also seek the grounds and woods in many places." Father Holtby adds that "a few laymen were taken and one only priest." This hunting for Catholics somewhat resembles what might be the description of an unsuccessful *battue* for game when the country assembles for sport, and little results except the destruction of a number of

⁶ Father Holtby's "Account of Three Martyrs," *Troubles*, Father Morris, S.J.

hares and pheasants. It was a continually-renewed excitement, especially for the idle and ill-disposed of the population, of which the poor Catholic was the victim. The consequences to him were not trifling.

Imprisonment was then a very different matter from what it now is. The horrible condition of the prisons of those days is well known. Numbers of Catholics died in them, some after a year or more, others lingering for periods of eight, ten, twelve, even twenty years, but finally sinking under their sufferings. It was not only the dungeons of the Tower or the lower wards of the Gatehouse, Counter, Clink, and other London prisons, where prisoners were "put into a hole with only straw for their lodging without other light but a candle," and where inmates died, "by the infection of the prison," even though, as was then customary, they paid for ordinary lodging. The gaols in the country were as bad or worse. We read of "two filthy prisons," there, "full of vermin," and of "women⁷ remaining for twenty weeks in one where they could not see at noontime to eat their meat without a candle, their beds loathsome with filth." In York Castle, the prisoners became "grievously diseased through the infectious air." The low Kidcote, Ousebridge, to which Mrs. Dorothy Vavasour, a lady, was removed, "after living many years virtuously in prison," is described as a "strait and pestilent place where she and many others fell sick and contracted such diseases as never left them until their dying day." The inmates too, except by the kind-

⁷ "Notes by a Prisoner in Ousebridge," *Troubles*, Father Morris, S.J.; also Father Grene's Manuscript, vol. M.

ness of the charitable, were, as to food, at the mercy of rapacious gaolers, who enriched themselves by half starving their prisoners. "Out of fifty-eight persons who were incarcerated at York in the time of" the Protestant "Archbishop Matthews, for refusing the oath of allegiance, forty died in prison." These are but instances, and not the worst; we read of the same treatment and mortality in other counties.

Fines and imprisonment, which could be inflicted for any of the numerous charges brought against a recusant, were generally then the results of one of the domiciliary visits, above described. But the most ordinary pretext for them, of whichever kind, and that which brought still heavier ruin, was the discovery of a priest, whom it was the glory of a Catholic family to shelter and conceal, and so to obtain the inestimable treasure of the sacraments. There was many a faithful Catholic household that, through the whole of those weary years of suffering, joyfully bore with all the risk and torturing anxiety, and offered a home to our Lord in the most Holy Sacrament. Mass was thus said daily in numerous private dwellings, with the intervals only of the discovery or necessary withdrawal of the priest, the Holy Sacrifice being again offered as soon as the danger was past. Such fervent souls have had their reward, in having preserved the precious inheritance of the faith, at so great a cost, to their families and to their country. Their descendants partake of it too, some of whom still hear Holy Mass in the very spots where their forefathers heard it in fear and trembling, with locked doors and with their life in

their hands. For such as these a great grace is still in store. A noble inheritance truly is theirs, for to them especially it belongs to restore the hearts of the children to the fathers, and to show love to the children of their persecutors by winning them to the faith. In thus returning good for evil and following the example of their ancestors, who drew multitudes from heresy and schism, though at the risk of their blood, they may, even in our peaceful times, attain to a share in their rich crown of glory hereafter.

With evils such as the above, which Catholics had to endure at the times of which we treat, and which are here given but in outline, is it to be wondered at that Marmaduke Ward should look with an anxious eye at the hope of retaining the influence of so powerful and rich an earldom as that of Westmoreland for the good cause? A worse evil also than any yet mentioned must have been very present to his mind and that of every thoughtful Catholic, as in each successive Parliament new and more severe laws were enacted against the old religion. What hope would exist for England with regard to the Catholic faith, after another such fifty years as those which had just passed? Protestant writers state that something under two-thirds of the population had conformed to the laws during the first forty years of Elizabeth's reign. Those who then remained faithful soon dwindled in numbers, for by degrees many, in spite of their consciences, attended the Protestant churches occasionally, just sufficiently to satisfy the statute, "until better times should come."

Their punishment followed, as is usual with such time-serving derelictions; the happy days of Catholicity never, alas! returned, and their children consequently became in reality what they themselves were only in outward appearance. The lukewarm in heart found no difficulty in this course of expediency; with them it was but indifference as to religion itself. It was easy to foresee that such defalcations would multiply, with the additional severity of the statutes threatened by the Parliament now assembled. Moreover the King, urged by his needy favourites, many of them Scotch, began in 1605 to make use of a power lately given him, of refusing the £20 a month for recusancy, and taking two thirds of the whole property instead. Lists "of such recusants as his Majesty hath granted liberty to his servants to make profit of," with the names of these grasping "servants" also, still exist.⁸ Among the former are those of many well-known Catholic families. There were but twenty peers in the Upper House who were Catholics at the date of which we speak, and even these, with but one exception, Lord Teynham, took the new oath of allegiance put forth by James. Well might Father Holtby write in the autumn of the year 1606, "partly by the doctrine of approving the oath" of allegiance, "and much more of allowing and defending our long-abhorred church-going, we were brought into that estate, that we fear in short time, *ne lucerna nostra prorsus extinguatur*. For now, not only weak persons here and there, upon fear of temporal losses, do relent

⁸ In the Public Record Office.

from their constancy, but the counties and shires run headlong without scruples unto the heretics' churches to service and sermons."

CHAPTER IX.

A Mass in Baldwin's Gardens.

1605, 1606.

MARMADUKE WARD followed up his somewhat stern interview with his daughter by desiring her to prepare to accompany him to London. Here he probably intended that her marriage with Neville should be concluded. He must have heard at Babthorpe how absolutely Mary had rejected Neville, but the perfect obedience she had always rendered to her father's commands excluded any idea that she would not yield to them in this instance. Knowing, however, something of the determination of her character where any question of right or wrong existed, he resolved that she should hear his decision through lips which, to a conscience tender as hers, would leave no way of escape. At the same time, the secret consciousness which he must have had that the announcement would be anything but acceptable, made him doubtless in no way sorry to depute the painful office of delivering it to another.

We must, then, accompany the father and daughter on their journey to London in the last

months of the year 1605. Our history has reached the sad period of the Gunpowder Plot, so natural a result of the tyranny and bad faith which had marked the conduct of King James towards the Catholics, and so disastrous in its own effects on the Catholics themselves. The journey of the father and daughter seems to have taken place just at the time of the discovery of the Plot, and Marmaduke was accidentally involved in suspicion. Among the original documents connected with the history of the Gunpowder Plot,¹ there is one containing the examination of "Marmaduke Ward, gentleman, of Newbie, in the county of York," when arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy, "taken before Sir Ffowlke Grevyll, Knight, and Bartholomew Hales, Esq., on November 6, 1605, at Beauchamp's Court, Warwickshire." It runs as follows: "Examine, being demanded when he came into this country, saith, a fortnight since, and hath continued at Mr. Jo. Write's at Lapworth, when Mr. Write discontinuing the space of one week past, his sister-in-law, Mrs. Write, entreated him (being accompanied with one Marke Brittaine, her man) to go to Mr. Winter with a horse to Huddenton, when as they past by Alcester an hour after the troops past, this ext. was apprehended, but the said Brittaine being well horst escaped. He further saith he knew not of the companies passing that way until they came to Alcester, nor of their purpose anything at all."

"The companies passing," were the band of conspirators of "the Plot of Powder," who the day

¹ P.R.O., *Gunpowder Plot Book*.

before, on finding their plans discovered, had ridden from London to Dunchurch,² "almost eighty miles, at so fast a pace and with such a resolution that it was hard to overtake them, and would not have been easy to have stayed them." They joined Sir Everard Digby there, who "presently," that is the next day, "caused all his men and horses to be ready, and departed with them. Mr. Catesby also, and other of the gentlemen, had prepared their horses and furniture ready in that place beforehand. Neither do I think they were above eighty in the whole company. They went presently to Warwick, and from thence towards Staffordshire."

It appears probable that Marmaduke Ward's arrest took place during the journey from Yorkshire to London, which he had announced to his daughter, as we have seen in the preceding chapter. They were perhaps invited, like the families of the conspirators, who seem to have been assembled in Warwickshire under the pretext (as it may have been) of a marriage. Father Garnett, also, though ignorant of their plans, was in the neighbourhood, namely, at Coughton,³ near Alcester, Mr. Thomas Throgmorton's, which was his appointed station for the festival of All Saints, when he was expected there by the different Catholic families of that district. Mary may perhaps have been with her father at Lapworth, a property which belonged to the Catesbys, though then occupied by John Wright. Her name, however, does not appear in a numerous

² Fr. Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, pp. 106, 107.

³ Lingard's *History of England*, vol. vii. p. 545. Edit. 1849.

list of the wives, children, and servants of all under suspicion, who were also taken into custody, including "Dorothy and Margaret, wives of John and Christopher Wright," her uncles, and her aunt "Martha, the wife of Percie." More probably Mary was at Upper Pillerton, not far distant, or at Barford, nearer Warwick, some of the Ward family having migrated from Yorkshire, in the reign of Mary the First, and settled in the former neighbourhood. But though not herself arrested, the succeeding days must have been passed by Mary in fearful anxiety and suspense, not knowing her father's fate, and in doubt as to the reports afloat concerning her uncles. Two days later, on the 8th of November, the fatal encounter of the conspirators with the sheriff's officers took place at Holbeach, when her two uncles, the Wrights, were killed, and her other uncle, Thomas Percy,⁴ was mortally wounded, and carried off with the rest to the Tower, where he only lived three or four days. Marmaduke Ward's happy ignorance of the projects of his brothers-in-law may perhaps have been owing to the prudence and caution, by means of which he had hitherto escaped being entangled in the troubles of the times, and we hear of no result to himself following upon his arrest. Before very long he was in London, where he persevered in going in spite of risk, and where Mary accompanied him as he had before determined.

The frightful events above related must in some

⁴ Two of the other conspirators, Robert and Thomas Winter, were also Mary's relations, their mother being Jane, sister of William and Sampson Ingleby and Mrs. Arthington, and others, all Mary's cousins.

measure have engrossed Mary's thoughts during the interval between the visit to Staffordshire and her arrival in London. But when she could turn them upon herself, the path she had entered upon seemed beset with difficulties. Edmund Neville had tried his best in Yorkshire, even urging his suit personally more than once, and openly declaring his intention of resigning his pretensions to the earldom (which would therefore pass to Protestants), and of never marrying, if she would not be his wife. Mary, true to the Divine calling, had remained immoveable; she had given her promise to One far greater, and His word alone could cause her to depart from it. But she could not be ignorant of her father's intentions. If he were silent regarding them, his very silence betrayed them, and she had probably heard also that the judgment of many, holier and wiser than herself, was against her in her refusal of Neville. One ray of light and comfort remained. In London she would see the friend and guide of her soul, who, for several years, had from time to time counselled and encouraged her in her aspirations after the religious state. Her father, she knew, had a high esteem and respect for his judgment, and his words could turn the scale in her favour. For the rest, she tells us herself what the present mental struggle cost her.

In this conflict, I prayed much and had little repose, forcing myself as best I could to put my mind into a state of indifference and myself totally into the hands of God, entreating Him, almost night and day, to do His Holy Will on this occasion, and not to permit anything in me or in

any other person to prevent the same; which truly He disposed for the best, and through means customary with His goodness where He wills to bestow a favour.

Mary and her father took up their abode in Baldwin's Gardens, Holborn, a neighbourhood then occupied by the houses of the nobility and others in easy circumstances. They were probably on a visit to some friend, though "lodgings" are mentioned, for there was a chapel in the house, which, considering what those dangerous days were, betokens rather the residence of some Catholic of good position. It was here that Marmaduke Ward expected to meet Father Holtby, and that he had arranged the plan by which he intended to give a final blow to his daughter's day-dreams, and to secure for her a position in life both advantageous to herself and useful to the Catholic cause. A few particulars are here added concerning this Father, as of one who had an important share in the decision of Mary Ward's vocation. They will also account for Marmaduke Ward's knowledge of and confidence in him.

Father Richard Holtby was born in Yorkshire in 1553, and had laboured in the north for three years, originally as a secular priest. After becoming a Jesuit, he returned there in 1589, and from that time for fifty-one years, he toiled unremittingly as a missionary, and mostly in that part of England, escaping all the efforts of the spies and pursuivants so effectually that he was never arrested. He died there at an advanced age in 1640. There are but few and scattered notices as to the exact places in which he laboured, but the account of the persecution

in the north which he sent to Father Garnett in 1594, shows him to have been well acquainted with the Catholics of Yorkshire. Mary Ward mentions him as having been her confessor for seven years; but this must have been at intervals only, as during part of that period he had resided much in Northumberland. In 1598, his "abode was but four miles from Brough," near Catterick, in the north of Yorkshire, and he then gave the Spiritual Exercises to Mrs. Dorothy Lawson, having been fetched by Mr. Anthony Holtby, his brother, steward to her father, Sir Henry Constable. In 1602-3, he is named in a list endorsed by Cecil as "the Jesuits that lurk in England:" "Mr. Holtbie with Mr. Hodgson at Heborne, three miles from Newcastle." In 1605-6, and shortly, therefore, before going to London, he was at Halton, in the same county, a place belonging to Launcelot Carnaby. On the execution of Father Garnett, in 1606, Father Holtby was appointed to succeed him as Superior, being already his Socius. The houses belonging to Father Garnett in London had, however, been discovered in the preceding summer by the spies, and had to be abandoned, and he himself found it most prudent to go for some months into the country for better concealment, where subsequently to the Plot he was betrayed and arrested, that is, in the following January. Father Holtby's presence had perhaps become requisite in London. Marmaduke Ward was evidently aware of his intended journey thither, though we are not told what interval elapsed after their arrival before his interview with Mary in Baldwin's Gardens.

It "was a little before Mass in the chapel of the house where she lodged in Baldwin's Gardens, in London," that Mary heard her father's wishes and commands in detail from Father Holtby. She may have surmised pretty well beforehand what Marmaduke Ward's plans for her were, but she was in no way prepared for the words with which that Father addressed her. In Yorkshire, her friends had "vehemently urged her" to accept Edward Neville, but it never had crossed her mind that "above all her confessor" would do so. She found him well acquainted with all the bearings of the subject in hand, and having explained at length their grave importance as affecting the whole Catholic body as well as herself, he went "so far as to say, were she a novice in any religion she would do God more service to come out and marry this party than to proceed, and particularly he resolving never to marry if she would not have him." "With what anguish Mary was filled by this communication is easier to imagine than to describe," says Father Lohner,⁵ "especially as she was accustomed to receive and to follow the counsel and opinion of her confessor as the will of God for her." She herself in a few words tells us something of her feelings at this unlooked for blow.

My confessor, to whom I had confessed for seven years, or little less, by God's permission, was also of opinion that in no way ought I to leave England nor to make myself a religious. Whose words truly were of weight, and on this occasion caused me inexpressible distress, because I did

⁵ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 28.

not dare to do what he prohibited as unlawful, nor could I embrace that which he proposed as my greater good. His motives were pious, prudent, regardful of the service of God and the common good.

"This assault, then, of her ghostly Father's was beyond measure sensible, carrying the colours of religion and zeal, insomuch that she, as it were in a death agony, cast herself at the feet of her dear Lord Jesus Christ, her good Master, and said 'it was He must answer for her,' and then, in holy quiet, free from noise and motion of any exterior things, rested in herself, united with God in a profound peace and tranquillity, remaining interiorly recollected and motionless, and as if insensible. In this manner she remained," while the priest made his meditation and preparation for Holy Mass, Mary meantime "praying unceasingly," "and not minding at all what passed there."

"Lots are cast into the lap, but they are disposed of by the Lord," says Holy Scripture. Marmaduke Ward had arranged his plans well, but he had to find by experience that, when once God has spoken the word, man's designs, though in the contrary direction, only aid to bring about its fulfilment, even through the most unlikely means. A little unforeseen accident, to which human weakness is at any moment liable, but permitted by a mightier Hand to happen at one certain moment, neither before nor after, and all is changed, and man's schemes melt away like hoar-frost before the sunbeams.

The Mass was over and still Mary prayed on. "The priest, after his recollection, which had been

longer than ordinary, washing his hands, she, forth of her wonted great respect to all priests, especially her ghostly Father, arose to give him the towel. She perceived he had wept much, and heard him say, his voice broken with sighs, 'What, is it then possible, shall I live to offend my God?' and turning to her, 'I will never more hinder your religious design and holy resolution, but further you all I can and assist you to effect it as much as possible, which was to her an unspeakable jubilee. By what means God changed this good priest his heart, He alone knoweth that wrought it, but in that Mass, after consecration, the chalice was spilt." One of Mary Ward's biographers thus relates the accident and its result: "The confessor was much alarmed by the upsetting of the chalice and spilling of the Holy Blood at Holy Mass, which he was saying in a private chapel, and, illuminated by a heavenly light, he forthwith discerned that Mary was chosen to be a bride of Christ." "This priest," adds Winefrid, "was a religious of a very exemplary life."

Mary, with her usual modesty in writing of herself, leaves out, as was customary with her, except when absolutely necessary for the Divine honour, what may be considered as supernatural in Father Holtby's sudden change of opinion, while gratefully acknowledging it to be a favour from God. She says only these few words concerning the whole occurrence:

But the same God deigned to behold and to have regard to me, in particular; and through the many merits of this His servant, and the true desire that he had for my good, He would not permit that I should be hindered

through his means, so that finally He caused him to change his opinion, at least so far as to leave me to myself in this matter, which was sufficient for me.

It appears, however, by the result, that Father Holtby went beyond this, for neither Mary's father nor her friends troubled her with further opposition on the subject of her becoming a religious, doubtless through his intervention.

We must not leave Edmund Neville, after so fatal a blow to his prospects, without a few words concerning his future career. Edmund possessed one of the highest qualities of a real hero, steadfastness of purpose, and we do not hear that he either indulged in regrets or sought for consolations. It would appear that the present episode in his life had followed upon some attempts to obtain the acknowledgment of his rights, which he had made, probably by the advice of Father Baldwin, and which had brought him into England from Douay, where he had been studying for the priesthood. Through the same advice he gave up his wish of embracing the ecclesiastical state, for the sake of the good to be gained by others, if his petitions for the Westmoreland title were granted. The Gunpowder Plot and its results must have considerably damped his hopes of success, and Mary's subsequent refusal, and her reasons for it, finally pointed out his future life to him, as he seems to have determined beforehand to accept her decision as being a sign of what God's will was for him. He appears to have lost no time in carrying out what was before him, but left England the same year, 1606, for Rome, where he was

ordained priest in 1608, and finally became a religious of the Society of Jesus.

If Edmund Neville had ever indulged in day-dreams of domestic happiness, rank with all its surroundings, and power, even though to be used in lavishing his riches in good works, he must have seen, ere he died, that God chose better for him than he himself. After long years of toil and privation passed on the English Mission,⁶ (to which he was sent at the conclusion of his novitiate) when finally, in his eighty-fifth year, past work and bed-ridden, we find him spending many months in one of the dismal county gaols, in chains, cold, and hunger, reduced to such a condition as to be dependent on the alms of a charitable lady for what kept life within him. He had been dragged out of bed, in the depths of winter, thrown into a cart and carried off to prison by the Parliamentary soldiers, as merciless a set as the pursuivants, on the suspicion of being a priest. There he remained for nine months. Then he was taken to London to be tried, but was discharged, almost in a dying state, for lack of evidence. This was in 1648. He did not long survive his release, for a disease, brought on by his hardships in prison, supervened, and he was rapidly carried off. Father Tanner calls him a noble confessor of Christ *in vinculis*, and, when free, an apostle. The coronet which he laid aside was exchanged for a far brighter crown. Such was the career of the noble-hearted man who had been proposed as a husband to Mary Ward. For herself, we shall see, as this story unfolds itself, whether her rejec-

⁶ See Father Tanner's *Societas Jesu*.

tion of Edmund Neville and his proffered honours and riches was a wise choice. We may add that the Earldom of Westmoreland, having been unsuccessfully claimed by Lord Abergavenny in 1604, a new creation was finally granted in 1624 to his grandson Francis Fane. But, long ere that time, James had to bestow Raby Castle and its splendid domain, which Queen Elizabeth had retained for the Crown, upon his unworthy favourite, the Earl of Somerset, then Lord Rochester.

Winefrid Wigmore does not spend many words upon Mary Ward's disappointed suitor. She only says, "Nor did he marry, but became a religious man and a priest, and from that time the title went to heretics, so as by his absence the Catholics lost a great support." Concerning Mary she continues: "The blessed servant of God was as if chains had been taken off her. Thus freed she even flew in pursuit of her holy designs, insensible of whatsoever else." Preparations were therefore made for Mary to quit her native country and go into Flanders. This was no easy matter, when the heaviest penalties were attached to Catholics for sending their children abroad. Ship-owners and mariners also, by a statute of 1604, were to forfeit their vessels and be imprisoned, for taking over any woman or child, and at such a moment as the present great difficulties would lie in the way of obtaining a formal leave of absence from England. It was a juncture of fierce political and religious excitement. The conspirators concerned in the Gunpowder Plot were executed January 30th and 31st, and on the former day Father Garnett and

Father Oldcorne had been discovered at Henlip House, Worcestershire, and brought to London. Their frequent examinations in the Tower and elsewhere followed, and subsequently the public trial and condemnation of Father Garnett.

During these events Mary was staying with relations in or near London, where she must have seen and heard much which influenced her later on in the choice of her vocation. At present her whole soul was filled with nothing else but the joy of obeying without delay the immediate call of God by going into religion. God made use of her meantime in behalf of those she was with. "Between this and the first time of her going over the seas, she lived in the house of another kinsman of hers, where her great modesty and rare discretion rendered her not only admirable but greatly helpful to that family, which, by an unfortunate match of the eldest son, was in imminent danger to ruin, as it did soon after her leaving it. Whilst she was there, her power was so prevalent with the young couple as she kept all in a good mean." Their name is nowhere given, but it was possibly while residing with them that a little incident occurred, which is also told us as happening before she left England. A gentleman named Errington (perhaps of the family of the martyr, Mr. George Errington, who suffered at York 1596), brought his children to see her. She looked fixedly at one of them, a strong healthy child of two or three years old, and said, "This child is marked out for Heaven." Her prediction was speedily fulfilled, for before many weeks had passed after this

interview, the apparently promising child fell sick and died.

Mary Ward had now reached the close of her holy and happy girlhood. The first great turning-point in her life was before her, her entrance upon the religious state, to which she had so perseveringly aspired. God filled her, it is true, with interior joy at the prospect, yet during the last days of her stay with her relations in England, many sorrowful thoughts must from time to time have dashed its brightness. Her father, probably, did not accompany her from London. Her passage was taken under a feigned name. But whenever it was that she saw him for the last time, she must have suffered severely—all the more so from the knowledge of the sacrifice he was making in giving up a daughter he so tenderly loved.

The courage which God gives to those who have to follow a high vocation, does not in any way diminish, it rather enhances, the natural tenderness of their hearts. Mary had learnt to fear, as well as to love and reverence, her father, but she had other ties which now it seemed as if she was breaking for ever. Her parting with her eldest brother, who "was to her the dearest of all her brothers and sisters, and most like and sympathising with her," would have inflicted another pang scarcely less painful. Many a lingering thought must have been turned towards Yorkshire, the home of her childhood, where she had passed so many happy, peaceful years. Her mother, too, and her younger brother and sisters were most likely there, for long journeys were of rare occurrence in those days. Mary had therefore, perhaps, been spared

last words with them. She may have thought that, in entering the cloister to which she was bound, she would be separated from them for ever in this world. But Mary did not flinch or waver : whatever struggle there had been with herself to give up all she loved, had long been over. We shall see in a future chapter whether, in the providence of God, Mary's friends were ever afterwards compensated for so great an amount of present suffering.

It may have been remarked by a careful reader of these first chapters of her life, that Mary Ward had not seemed, to herself or to others, to be guided to any one particular religious institute. In such souls as hers, souls which have a strong drawing to religion in general, even after the first obstacles have been overcome, it is not uncommon to find some difficulty in guiding the choice to that one religious home which is most fitted for them in the Providence of God. Yet it must be quite certain that God's designs on the souls of His children must be special, and that it may be as great a mistake to place, for example, a soul intended for contemplation in an active order, or the reverse, as to bid such a soul abandon the idea of the religious life altogether, and settle in the world. And God has very marvellous designs on certain souls—designs which seem strange to human prudence, and are often strongly opposed by timid or narrow-minded servants of His own. In the case of Mary Ward, her work in the Church was certainly to be one of which neither she herself nor any of her directors dreamt at the time of her life at which we have now arrived.

NOTES TO BOOK I.

Note I.—*Givendale*. (page 1.)

The mansion at Givendale stood on the east bank of the River Ure, about three miles below Ripon, commanding beautiful views both up and down the valley. It has long since been demolished, but towards the end of the last century, when the foundations were disturbed in the croft between the road leading to Newby Hall and the present farmhouse of Givendale, several stones bearing fragments of inscriptions in black letter were discovered and walled into the out-buildings. The original house had probably occupied a site still partly surrounded by a moat, on lower ground, a little to the north of the other (see Walbran's *Fountains Abbey*, also *History of Durham*, both publications of the Surtees Society).

Note II.—*Equites Aurati*. (page 2.)

"Knight Batchelor. This, although the lowest order of knighthood, is nevertheless the most ancient. It was formerly accounted the highest military dignity, and the foundation of all other honours. Matthew Paris informs us that such knights were known by a gold ring on their thumbs, a chain of gold about their necks, and gilt spurs. In old records, from the privilege of adorning their armour and horses with gold, and wearing golden spurs given them at their creation, they were termed *Equites Aurati*—Golden Knights. They held land by which they were obliged to serve the King in his wars for forty days, at their own expense" (Robson's *British Herald*, vol. i. p. 75).

Note III.—*Sir Christopher Ward*. (page 3.)

To those interested in endeavouring to trace the missing link connecting Marmaduke Ward with his ancestor, Sir Christopher, the following information may not be unwelcome. In the Public Record Office is to be found the Inquisitio Post

Mortem of Sir Christopher Ward (see Catalogue of Inquisitiones Post Mortem, vol. Henry VIII.), made in October, 1521, the year he died. By this it appears that in conjunction with his brother, John Ward, he executed a deed in 1518, delivering his manors of Givendale, Guiseley, Newby, Esseholt, and many others, to a number of trustees who are named, the first of whom is Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, to be disposed of by them as he had directed in an indenture made by him the previous March of the same year. Certain lands are named and excepted which he had sold to his brother John. This indenture has unfortunately not yet come to light.

The heirs named in the Inquisition are Johanna Musgrave, Sir Christopher's daughter, then thirty-four years of age, and three daughters of his eldest daughter, Anne Neville: Catherine, wife of Sir Walter Strickland; Joan, wife of Sir John Constable of Burton Constable; and Clara, aged fourteen, who afterwards married Francis Neville of Holt.

Francis Neville, the brother of these grand-daughters of Sir Christopher, is not mentioned in the Inquisition. His death, in 1529, is recorded in Dodsworth's *Collections*, Bodleian Library. He was then seized of Thornton Bridge and a third part of the four manors mentioned above, and among them therefore of a part of Newby which belonged to Marmaduke Ward in 1585. Two infant sisters of Francis, Mary and Anne, respectively one and three years old, are alone named with him, perhaps half-sisters only, as they do not appear in the Ward pedigree given in the same *Collections* (vol. iii.). This pedigree traces up the family to mediæval times, and gives the marriages of Sir Christopher's daughters and of his grand-daughters, the three Nevilles of Thornton Bridge. Sir Christopher's brothers are entered as dying *sine prole*, except his brother John, of whom neither wife nor children are named.

The manors of Old and New Mulwith, which were part of Marmaduke's Ward's property, are not mentioned in any of the above documents. According to the *Inquisitio Post Mortem*, Givendale and Newby were held of the Archbishop of York. The latter was then valued at twenty marks yearly. In 1546 it was transferred to the King as suzerain.

Note IV.—*The Search at Ardington.* (page 34.)

We have omitted in the text to give certain details as to the search at Ardington, which are here supplied. "Wherefore," the narrative proceeds, "he (Huntingdon) sent with all speed a company of bad companions of his own household for more trust and assurance. Coming near the house, they drew their swords, bent their pistols, and buckled themselves for battle, but perceiving by one of the house that there was no fear of fighting, the greatest resistance consisting only in a company of women, they put up their weapons and entered, searched, rifled, turned, and tossed all things upside down, but found nothing greatly for their purpose. Yet fearing to be disappointed of their journey, they determined not to depart with speed, but seated themselves in the house, and as though all were their own, made provision for themselves, at the gentlewoman's cost, until Thursday or Friday following. During which time they found in the house certain apparel of some gentlemen, as doublets, hose, silk and Guernsey stockings. Upon them they seized by the President's warrant, whose beggary is such that he is not otherways wont to reward his trusty servants than with the spoils of such as he persecuteth. Yet the pursuivant returned home all in a chafe that he sped no better, and his wife also not well appaied that his budget came so light home, for she was accustomed always to give the first welcome to his cap-case at his return, which seldom or never before came so empty" (Father Holtby's Narrative, *Troubles*, series iii. p. 164).

THE LIFE OF MARY WARD.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE SEARCH AFTER AN INSTITUTE.

CHAPTER I.

The mistake of a Director.

1606.

THE day at length arrived for Mary's departure, all being now ready for the journey. Her father had secured a travelling companion to take charge of her, in the person of Mrs. Catharine Bentley, who was perhaps the widow of Edward Bentley, mentioned in 1593, in a list of Topcliffe's to Lord Burghley, as "lately condemned for treason, but at liberty, and his wife, daughter of Reaper (*sic*) and niece to Lord Montague." She was frequently employed in the same charitable task of conveying young Catholic girls to a safe refuge in the convents abroad. We have Mary's own account of her journey written in English. It is an unfinished fragment only, and is dated August 19, 1624.

The Whitsuntide following that Christmas whereon I was twenty-one, I happily begun my long desired journey from England towards Flanders, there to become a religious woman. Upon the Thursday before Whit-Sunday in the year 1606, I parted with unspeakable content from London towards Canterbury, where I stayed Whitsun holidays in company of Mrs. Catharine Bentley, in whose pass I was to go over seas as one of her daughters. Our stay in that city was in Mrs. Bentley her mother her house, called Mrs. Roper, &c.

The day of the journey, which was, according to the old style, May 1st, (the use of the old calendar being still retained in England, except by the Catholic Church,) may have been fixed on purpose, as being originally appointed for Father Garnett's execution, and therefore less likely to attract notice, every one's attention being directed to the event about to take place in another part of London. But Father Garnett "misliked the choice they had made of that day, as well in regard it hath not been usual to put to death upon such great feasts, as for that it hath long time been a custom in England upon that day in the morning early, for the people to go into the fields and come home with green boughs in their hands in sign of joy, and to spend most of that day in triumph and pastime. To which effect Father Garnett made answer: 'What, will they make a May game of me?' When it was told to the Council what he had said, they saw it was not fit, and altered the day from Thursday, which was May-day, until the Saturday following, which was the Invention of the Holy Cross," old style, but Whitsun Eve, May 13th, new style, "and the day no doubt assigned by Almighty God for his martyrdom,"¹ and on which it finally took place. Father Gerard, who had escaped from the Tower in 1597, safely eluded, on the same day, Topcliffe and the spies who were in pursuit of him, both for this and on the false charge of his being concerned in the Plot, and crossed over with the Spanish and Flemish Ambassadors. "The Amba-

¹ Father John Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot* in *Condition of Catholics*, p. 288.

sador himself came to fetch me," he says in his life,² "and with his own hands helped to dress me in his livery, so that I might be taken for one of his attendants. Now just at this time," he adds, "Father Garnett's martyrdom was consummated in London, and he, being received into Heaven, remembered me upon earth. All went well, and I do not doubt that I owed it to Father Garnett's prayers."

Mary Ward must have crossed three or four days later, but doubtless some particulars of the holy death fulfilled on Whitsun Eve in St. Paul's Churchyard would have been conveyed to her previously by Marmaduke Ward or others. For we read, that at the sight "the tears of Catholics were turned into triumph for the victory which this champion of God had gotten of the slanders of the world, and even the very heretics said, without doubt he is in Heaven. Others said he died like a saint, and his enemies themselves who were beholders, did bear witness of his innocency, and wished their souls with his."³ Such news would have been quickly carried to devout Catholics in the country, and these were probably Mary Ward's last reminiscences of England, as regarded exterior matters.

After this short stay in Canterbury, "we went thence to Dover," Mary continues, "a port-town of England, then passed the seas, in four or five hours arrived at Calais, and from thence to the city of St. Omer." The journey was soon over, but how

² Father John Gerard's Life, by Father Morris, p. 415.

³ Father John Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, pp. 296, 300.

was Mary faring meantime inwardly, with respect to her own personal prospects in a foreign land? Gloomily and anxiously the future began to dawn before her. Her joy of heart was gone, at least for the time—a gift sent to her, perhaps, to help her through what must otherwise have cut very deeply, the parting with her father. She thus describes, in her Italian life, the dark cloud which hung over her just before and while she was leaving England. "Setting forth then upon the so greatly desired journey, and not yet out of England, a great obscurity darkened my mind and doubts rose up within me, as to where and in what religious order I should have to remain, and in this darkness and disquiet of soul, I passed the sea and arrived at St. Omer." Yes, the sacrifice was to cut far deeper than Mary probably anticipated, and the shadow had already fallen upon her. But let us take a short survey of the town, with whose streets and inhabitants Mary was so soon to become well acquainted.

St. Omer, at the date when Mary Ward arrived there, belonged to the Spanish Netherlands, which, in 1598, had, with the rest of Holland, formed the marriage portion of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, daughter of Philip II., who now governed those provinces as their sovereign, in conjunction with her husband, the Archduke Albert of Austria. We shall hear further concerning "the Archdukes," as they were ordinarily called, in the course of this history. From very early times St. Omer had been noted for its piety, a fact which even the coat of arms it bore makes known to us, this being a double cross, with

the motto, *Signum sanctæ crucis*. We are told that "formerly there were niches carved on the exterior of almost every house containing small statues of saints, that of our Lady being conspicuous at the corners of the streets. In times of sickness, famine, or war, the inhabitants were to be seen engaged in public prayers and processions, erecting crosses in various spots. Lighted candles were then placed at all the gates of the town, and the people flocked in crowds to the churches demanding that the relics of St. Omer (brought to the Cathedral in 667 from Therouanne, of which he was Bishop,) and of St. Bertin should be exposed for veneration."⁴ All classes of them were consequently firm adherents of the Spanish Government and declared enemies of the doctrines of Calvin. They enrolled themselves in great numbers in the Associations of the *Pater noster* and of the Rosary, and joined the Catholic forces in the northern provinces, where the war had been carried on against the Protestant party since 1567, when the Duke of Alva became Regent. It can well be imagined that heresy would find little favour if it ventured to show itself in the midst of such zealous spirits. Occasionally, heretics were brought up before the magistrates, and in 1614, and on two or three later occasions, it is noted, that three or four had to do public penance, "en linceul," and were dismissed the town.

In a Catholic population possessed of so much fervour, it is not surprising to find that houses of

⁴ Derheims, *Histoire civile, politique, religieuse, &c., de la Ville de Saint Omer*, p. 654.

religion flourished and that they were many in number, both for men and women. Of the latter, besides two convents of religious of the Order of St. Clare, of which we shall have to speak further, there were Dominicanesses, and two convents of the Third Order of St. Francis, who nursed the sick and lodged strangers. There was a community of *Sœurs de St. Catharine de Sion*, and another of *Filles du pain de Dieu*, so called because they begged through the town for the poor. The foundations for men were not less numerous, comprising, besides the magnificent Benedictine Abbey of St. Bertin, then filled with fervent and holy monks, houses of Dominican Fathers, Capuchins, Cordeliers, and a College of French Jesuits.

It was to "the College of the Fathers of the Company of Jesus of the English nation, commonly called the English Seminary," that Mary Ward had been directed before leaving home, that she might "treat with them concerning the monasteries of the city." This College had been instituted at St. Omer in 1592, by Father Parsons, who obtained the permission from Philip II. The Seminary soon numbered one hundred and fifty scholars of the best English Catholic families, and before long enjoyed a great reputation, so that it became an honourable distinction to say of any one that he was educated at St. Omer.

I went to deliver there [continues Mary] certain letters of commendation given me by Father Holtby, an English Father of the said Society, a man of special note, which then lived in England, to a Father of the aforesaid Seminary

called Father William Flacke,⁵ for whom being entered the porch I called. Immediately came to me one called Father George Keynes,⁶ who told me that I was and had been for some time expected at a monastery of Poor Clares in that town, wherein were and had lived divers years several gentlewomen of our nation, commending much the place, the discipline observed amongst these religious, and particularly the wit, good quality, spirit, and perfection of those of our nation that were amongst them, and of their Order, adding that this monastery was now so full that they were resolved to admit no more English within their inclosure, or to be of the Quire, as was experienced some few months before in a niece of the Lord Lumley's called Mrs. Anne Campian,⁷ who, said he, desiring to be of that holy Order and wanted not friends to intreat her admittance, they utterly denied to receive as one of the Quire, but offered to admit her for a Lay-sister, which she accepted and there she lives with much content. Her only difficulty is that by reason of her years, she is unapt to learn their language, which impediment said he, is not in you, being young, &c.

He added that the Abbess and some of our nation had many months expected my coming, that my place was already granted amongst the lay-sisters, more being not to be obtained for any English; that Mrs. Campian her

⁵ Father Flacke was employed by Father Parsons, in 1592, to lay the foundations of the College at St. Omer. He continued to govern it for two years, and by his active zeal and systematic firmness mainly contributed to its subsequent stability. For the greater part of his life he superintended its pecuniary concerns. He experienced a wonderful cure through the intercession of St. Aloysius, which he survived five years, and died in 1637, aged eighty-two years (Dr. Oliver's *Collections*, p. 93).

⁶ This Father died at St. Omer, 1611; he is described as "a prudent and most virtuous man, and a favourite with all."

⁷ This name was frequently assumed out of devotion to the martyr.

clothing was deferred so long as the Abbess could, though with some inconvenience, so desirous she was we should have taken the habits together. That the state of lay-sister was indeed held amongst worldlings more abject, and of less renown, otherwise he did assure me the lay-sisters and the Quire of those of that monastery were of one and the same order and equal merit in the sight of God. And verily, quoth he, I judge it the will of God you should be there and enter as lay-sister.

While this good Father was in this discourse, came into the porch Father William Flacke, to whom my letters were directed. To him I gave them, who retiring aside read them and after gave ear to Father George his discourse, observing as it seemed some change in my countenance, or sign of less grateful acceptance: whereupon he spoke these very words, "Nay, gentlewoman," (for he knew not my name)——

Here the English fragment comes suddenly to an end, but in the Italian manuscript Mary proceeds with the history, though with fewer details and consequently without Father Flacke's concluding words. The latter, however, appears not to have interfered finally in the arrangements, Father Keynes becoming Mary's confessor for a time and taking the whole responsibility on himself. On the present occasion continuing the conversation, he repeated :

"That those nuns within the inclosure and those without were one and the same order and rule, only that to those without were added an act of charity in maintaining the others by their religious labours, and an act of humility in begging for the rest, which," adds Mary, "I afterwards experienced to be the contrary, the rules being very different and the ordering and exercises quite

diverse, but the Father spoke as he had heard. In conclusion, he expressed his admiration at the Providence of God in the circumstances coinciding with the great desire of the nuns to accept me so quickly, never having seen me, affirming that certainly it was the will of God and my true vocation."

The community thus strongly recommended by Father Keynes to Mary was originally a filiation sent from Antwerp to the town of Veere, in the Netherlands, whence they had to return to the mother-house one hundred years afterwards, during the Calvinist troubles in 1572. In 1581, the two amalgamated communities were, in common with all other religious, expelled by the Calvinists from Antwerp at twenty-four hours' notice. A kind merchant recognized them under their disguise, while they were waiting at the port of the city in hopes that God would provide them some means of obtaining a passage, they knew not where. He recommended them to go to St. Omer, perhaps from the pious reputation of the inhabitants, and promised to convey them free of charge as far as his vessel would take them. From Gravelines, where they landed, the Sieur de la Motte conducted them to St. Omer. They were kindly received there, and settled in the Rue des Nollards, where they increased rapidly in numbers, and where they were still residing in 1606. The second community of nuns of the Order of St. Clare in St. Omer, who will be mentioned in the sequel, were called Urbanists, because they followed the Rule of St. Clare, as mitigated by Pope Urban IV. in 1262. They had been settled there ever since

1290, and, as they could possess property in common, the townspeople called them Rich Clares, to distinguish them from the nuns of the other convent, who were Colettines, that is, of the severest Rule of St. Clare, and who lived principally on the alms collected from the inhabitants, having several lay-sisters, who followed the Third Rule of St. Francis, and went out daily to beg for them. The Urbanists had a large convent within the walls, and were a numerous body during the latter part of the Spanish rule in the Netherlands.

An incident had occurred among the Colettines shortly before Mary Ward's arrival, which, as she afterwards found out, fully explained their eager desire to receive her without delay. It seems that one of the lay-sisters already mentioned as employed outside the enclosure in collecting alms for the community, had been guilty of some levity of conduct, and that this had brought discredit and injury to the convent itself. Mary Ward's reputation for modesty and exemplary conduct in all such matters had preceded her arrival in Flanders, and the nuns thought that her great natural gifts, and the sacrifice which she was making of all that was dearest to her for the sake of God's service, would at once restore the impaired credit of the community, if she could be employed in the humble and delicate office in which so much scandal had lately been given.

Father Holtby, in accordance with his promise to Mary, to further her in her design as much as lay in his power, had probably already written to St. Omer at an earlier period respecting her, and others.

of her friends who perhaps had relations within the cloisters must have done the same. The nuns, consequently, never doubted that she would avail herself of the present opportunity, especially as it was considered a favour, vacancies in the convent being rare, and aspirants numerous.

Mary was now entering upon another phase in her spiritual life. She had experienced so markedly the interference of God's providence when she gave up the decision concerning her vocation to Him, that she had no other thought when she left home but to place herself again like a child in the same loving Father's gracious hands for Him to dispose of where He would. And God accepted the generous offer, though not in the way she expected.

Arrived at St. Omer, and, not assured of the particular Order God would have her embrace, she put herself into the direction of her ghostly Father, confident that God, for Whom she did it, would guide her by him, as in effect He did in the sense of *Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum*. But as by following effects it appeared, there was in that occasion much for her to suffer, God permitting this good religious man to be drawn to the interests of others, to her great disadvantage.

Nothing could be more at variance with her inclinations and desires than the offer of the Poor Clares and Father Keynes' advice. She heard them with the chill of disappointment stealing over her. "I remained silent," she says, "for a time, feeling an extreme repugnance to accept their offers. But arguing interiorly with myself, it appeared to me that, the rules being the same, and the place proposed to

me only more abject and contemptible, the repugnance and aversion which I felt could spring from nothing but pride. Those words, 'the will of God,' so pierced my heart, that I did not dare speak or think otherwise." It resulted, then, that "the first day after my arrival, I was invited by these holy nuns to stay with them, which I did, and I remained there a month before taking the habit."

This month was a time of suffering and mental struggle to Mary. Her desires for a life of contemplation and solitude were as strong as ever, she had sought to fulfil them in the way appointed by God, and in their place something so different was presented as distinctly the Divine will for her that she shrank from it even with disgust. Yet, "saying,"⁸ as Father Keynes had, that "it was the will of God, was of such high force as to overcome whatsoever inclination or feeling of her own, and embrace what was so contrary to her, and to which she had such a repugnance, as that I have heard her say it had been sweeter to her to have entered into a caldron of boiling oil, than put herself into a life of so great distraction, she wholly inclining to retirement, and had practised it more exactly in her father's house than that place afforded her means for." One so distrustful as Mary was of herself would have found great difficulty in disputing a judgment given in such words as these. And besides she knew no better way, had she wished for it, of obtaining what she sought, than by following the guidance Almighty God had sent her. Father Holtby had evidently referred her

⁸ Winefrid Wigmore's MS.

for direction on the subject to the Fathers of the English College of St. Omer, and in those troublesome times communication by letter was too long and uncertain for her to wait to consult him, even if he had not already been seized and imprisoned since she left London, which at any moment might have been the case.

Meanwhile Mary received offers from other religious houses. She tells us herself her thoughts concerning them: "I was at the same time invited to other orders, as those of St. Benedict, St. Augustine, &c." (probably the English Benedictines of Brussels, and the French Augustinians at Louvain, as there is no trace of either Order having a house at St. Omer,) "where I should have been received with all love, and as I myself wished; but these did not appear to me to be of such austerity as I sought. In short, the fear of my own pride, and the words of the Father that this was the will of God, so bound me, that I did not dare do anything of myself to the contrary." Only one course suggested itself to her and this she adopted. She would take her cause once more to Almighty God, and give it with all confidence to Him to settle, and she would then open her heart fully on the subject to those to whom God had brought her, and abide by their decision whatever it might cost her.

Turning myself therefore to God, I applied myself to prayer with extreme diligence, entreating that the Divine will might be done whatever it should be, without regard to my content or consolation, present or future, and then, with all sincerity, I declared, both to my Confessor and

to the Superiors of the monastery, the internal suffering which I felt, and the exceeding difficulty which I found in embracing that vocation, throwing myself for the rest upon the Providence of God, to follow Whose holy will, I resolved to do whatever should be ordered me by them.

But though, through after events, we learn reverently to admire the wonderful ordering of Divine Providence by which Mary was thus drawn in spite of herself to a course so uncongenial to her, we must still be permitted to marvel at the line of conduct adopted both by Father Keynes and the Abbess on this occasion. There were three cogent reasons for a decision contrary to that which they urged, which might well have had weight with them. The first and strongest of them was Mary's own inward conviction, grounded on her ardent desire for the greatest amount of conventual seclusion possible, that her vocation was not that of a lay-sister, whose life was outside the cloister, and whose duties consisted entirely in exterior work. Secondly, the Father Provincial of the Franciscans, who had to be consulted, "made a difficulty of admitting me," writes Mary, "for the service of the inclosed, judging perhaps that I was not fit for those practices." He saw plainly what others concealed from themselves, that Mary was wholly unfitted for the rough life which the calling of a lay-sister brought with it. It was through his opposition that her clothing did not take place at once, for the nuns were bent that there should be no delay. Thirdly, "the people likewise of the city murmured at it, asking the Abbess why she did not accept me within." But the Abbess persuading herself that her humble docility

and readiness to obey were a concealed humility, which desired to serve the choir nuns as a means of humiliation, pleaded as an excuse that Mary herself would have it so. She "replied to them, that my humility was such that I absolutely would serve the inclosed, which devotion," adds the poor victim, "God knows was far from my thought, although His Divine Majesty made use of their customs and manner of living on this occasion for my great good, and to dispose my soul for still greater."

By putting ourselves back into the Abbess' position we may perhaps find some better excuse for what appears, at this distance of time, to have been a mistaken line of conduct. The difficulties into which the convent was thrown by the defalcation in its supplies, were probably greater than even those living outside could realize. A failure in the amount of the daily food to be portioned out to an inclosed community of Poor Clares depending on alms cannot be a slight distress. Doubtless many fervent prayers were offered up both concerning the famine and its remedy, which had been diligently sought after, and when the latter apparently presented itself in the person of one so winning in address, so affable in speech, so gentle and courteous in deportment, and at the same time so holy in her life, and so docile and solicitous for guidance, it is easy to see how they may have thought their prayers had been answered. At the same time, those who have lived many years within the shelter of an inclosed convent, lose the vivid recollections of what the world and its dangers and roughnesses are outside, and these nuns, in their

thankfulness and joy, forgot what a beautiful young girl, delicately brought up under the safe shadow of a refined home, would have to suffer as a lay-sister begging through the streets of a foreign town. Mary's desire for the hardships and humiliations of an ascetic life and its practices told against her also, for those she might occasionally receive in her daily rounds, would, they thought, be an equivalent, and sufficiently satisfy her, while their own difficulties would come to an end through her means.

It must be added, that the Abbess and her nuns could always say to themselves, that their desire to see Mary Ward serving their interests as an "outsister" was strongly supported by the Jesuit Father under whose guidance she was now living. The excuses that can be made for these good religious women can hardly shelter Father Keynes from the charge of precipitancy and imprudence. Unfortunately such cases as his are not rare. Confessors to whom a number of penitents apply for direction as to a religious vocation are often led into mistakes by carelessness, by negligence in examining the character of those whom they have to guide, by an off-hand desire to be rid of the trouble of settling what is a very delicate question indeed, and sometimes even by their fondness for a particular community, into whose ranks they press one poor soul after another. If it has been truly said that the guidance of souls is "the art of arts," no function of those who have to practise this art requires more prayer, more thought, more disinterestedness, and more divine illumination than the function of settling a vocation. The mischief

done by a hasty and inconsiderate exercise of the immense authority which the position of a spiritual guide practically confers may not be fully seen in this world. It can only be known at the last day, how many souls have been tortured, how many stunted and dwarfed and cramped, and how many absolutely ruined, by the folly of a director who has thought, perhaps, that he was remarkably successful just when his greatest errors were being committed.

During the discussions which were carried on concerning her, Mary, having once explained her own feelings fully, remained entirely passive. She relates thus what finally took place. "The importunity of the nuns was so great, that at last the Father Provincial consented, and I was clothed by the advice and command of my confessor, the Father of the Company of Jesus, who affirmed that such was the will of God, and this my true vocation, and that if an angel from Heaven should tell me the contrary, I ought not to believe him." His words once more rung in her ears and found an echo in her heart, and "notwithstanding her repugnance," says Winefrid Wigmore, "her ghostly father saying it was God's will, she without reply or resistance put on the habit." And such, in truth, in after years she found it to have been—the same loving guiding of the same gracious hand—though in writing then of all that had passed, the remembrance of her mental sufferings, even after the lapse of time, rose up vividly before her, showing how severe those sufferings had been.

From his [Father Keynes'] counsel I did not dare to depart, esteeming this to be my sole security, these words frequently coming to my mind, *Qui vos audit, Me audit, &c.*, and thus I followed it willingly but with such an aversion and grief, that death by any kind of torment that I could imagine to myself, appeared most sweet to me if so I could escape from that, which nevertheless, I now believe to have been a thing which God willed, and a fitting way, at least seasonable, for what was to follow.

We shall see by and bye, how invaluable was the dearly won experience gained by Mary in a thousand ways, as well as the immediate results, for the good of other souls, which sprang from this painful time. One of her biographers, while refraining from other comments and remembering the magnitude of these results, adds curtly: “The wisdom and providence of God ‘lead the just by right ways.’ It is nothing new that Almighty God allows souls to be conducted by their ghostly fathers through roundabout ways, especially through such as are of greater profit to them, both for the increase of their merit and the trial of their virtue, as well as for the spiritual service of their neighbour, and which therefore tend to the greater honour of God. These may be roundabout ways, but they are no wrong ways.” That is, they are permitted by God for the execution of His own beautiful designs in individual souls, as the evil deeds of Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the rulers of the Jews, were permitted by Him in order to carry out His Divine counsels for the redemption of the world. The issue is turned to good, and the innocent victims of mis-

direction gain immense merit and wonderful experience. Happy is it for the instruments of their sufferings, if they can discern, by what they see, something of their own self-confidence and recklessness!

Father Lohner, however, in his *Life of Mary Ward*, does not hesitate to condemn the conduct of those by whose counsel alone she had been guided in a matter of so much moment to herself. But even his censure may appear too mild in the eyes of some of our readers for Father Keynes' arbitrary and one-sided decisions. "It must not be forgotten that in the direction of this wonderfully obedient soul, the right line was not, in my opinion, taken, since it is contrary to ordinary precept and practice for spiritual Fathers, that any should so expressly constrain and almost command those deliberating upon a choice of vocation, to some one particular calling, which once and again happened to Mary. Much more, were an assured Divine interposition in the case, should time and unfettered liberty be left to them, and they themselves be allowed, having well considered all the advantages and disadvantages of the several callings, to make the decision."⁹

⁹ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 46.

CHAPTER II.

Outside the Grille.

1606.

WE may now take a glance at the poor lay-sister Mary in her new vocation. Strange feelings must have been hers at first, that after having prayed and toiled incessantly for seven long years, she should, when the goal seemed won, find herself, as her biographer Bissel remarks, not, as she had so longingly desired, sitting with the loving Magdalene at the feet of her Lord, but pledged to the life of a Martha, and instead of the peaceful calm of a contemplative life, plunged at once into all the distractions and spiritual hindrances of one of the most active kind possible. A second long seven years were before her, though she little knew it. Let us look at her at their outset.

God's will, as she believed, once manifested to her, and her present calling settled, she lost not a moment in entering upon its duties, and the very first day found her in the midst of them, "and without the least regard," says Winefrid Wigmore, "to what herself would or would not, did exactly what the strongest and meanest-born among them did." Her principal and daily business consisted in begging and collecting the alms and gifts of the townspeople.

For this purpose she had to set out very early in the morning with a basket and wallet on her arm, and not only to traverse the streets from one end to the other, but also to go into the country beyond to greater distances, knocking and begging at every door. As St. Omer contained at this period a population of some ten thousand persons, and had two large suburbs beyond the walls, being a fortified town, she had a considerable space of ground to travel over. The town is half surrounded by extensive marshes, and the inhabitants of the suburbs, Hautpont and Lyzel, who have been settled there from very remote times, possess innumerable nursery gardens, almost like floating islands, which are subdivided by three hundred canals, "forming a sort of rustic Venice,"¹ just outside the gates. Here they maintain themselves by cultivating vegetables to supply the markets of Dunkirk and Lille, as well as of St. Omer itself. These people speak Flemish, and still retain the simple manners and piety of mediæval times, and Mary must have found them valuable contributors to her wallet, for the perpetual *maigre* fare of her Sisters within the cloister.

When Mary went out on her rounds and had obtained a load, of whatever kind, she returned with it to the convent, emptied the basket, and if it was still daylight, or according as necessity required, had to start again. Frequently she could not dine at home at the convent, and was obliged, therefore, to get herself invited somewhere in the town. At first a French lay-sister sometimes went with her, and

¹ Guilbert, *Villes de France*, tom. iii. p. 355.

Mary's personal appearance, both in carriage and manners, being remarkably striking, it was a strange spectacle to many, who did not fail to remark it, to see a delicate and noble-looking lady carrying the begging wallet after another lay-sister who had been long accustomed and was well-fitted to the business. Besides, Mary did not understand the French language yet, so that everyone knew her to be a foreigner. And indeed the practice of poverty, in the shape in which it now fell upon her, was as severe in its circumstances as the voluntary poverty to be read of in the life of beggar-saints. Not only had she to beg, but to be despised and laughed at also, for besides the universal scoffs and derision which are ready everywhere for holy poverty, and which those who beg for poor convents have sufficiently to experience, she was employed with begging sisters, who at that time did not stand well in the town. Instead of alms, consequently, she had more frequently to receive not only contemptuous words, but disgraceful and abusive language also.

But the hardest thing of all, and that which she had the greatest difficulty in accustoming herself to endure was, that this ceaseless life of begging entirely deprived her of her dearly-loved solitude, hours of prayer, and meditation. "St. Alexius," says the German biographer already quoted, "when he fled from the world and begged, yet had a quiet corner under the steps for prayer and meditation. When that despiser of the world, St. Ignatius, had begged a piece of bread at Manresa, it lasted him for his food for three days, and he could therefore meantime make medita-

tions enough both for himself and for the whole Christian world. But Mary Ward, while begging, had no opportunity for recollection, and a thousand kinds of perpetual disturbances instead." Her soul, therefore, was, as it were, in fetters, and it may be imagined what, even in this respect, the long year of begging life cost her, during which she persevered in doing what was so contrary to her nature and inclinations.

Mary's courageous and determined spirit, however, bore her bravely onwards. Our manuscript tells us that she "carried burthens, going into the country to beg, fared rudely with only very coarse food, and lodged worse;" but the consequences came at last, and this way of proceeding, "though it could not master her heroical and gallant mind, did in a few months her young and delicate body." Elsewhere we are told that it was after "hard work, with rough walking, heavy carrying, poor eating, and still worse sleeping, for five months," that, as her friend Winefrid continues, "those labours and overheatings caused an impostume in the knee, which confined her for some time to her bed, which her generous mind, a little tyrannical, which had too great a severity to herself, could not brook long, representing to her that it was sparing herself too much to remain in bed; wherefore rising, she went about her work as if nothing had ailed her, yet was she fain to carry for many months after a poultice at her knee."

But trying as must have been the bodily suffering which fell to Mary in her work day by day, she still possessed the necessities of life. Though her food was coarse and her lodging rough, she had what

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sufficed, and the needs of her sickness were also fully supplied. In spiritual matters she fared differently, and as far as human aid or consolation went she was not only almost entirely destitute of either, but her counsellors, when she sought help, only added to her perplexities. Mary writes that, from the first, she had recourse to the Novice Mistress set over her, a countrywoman of her own, Sister Mary Googe or Gough, a very holy woman, who was living out of enclosure to superintend the lay-sisters, and of whom we shall hear more hereafter. Some months subsequently, that is early in the year following Mary's entrance, this nun "was attacked by a malignant fever and had to withdraw again within the enclosure, whither those without did not and could not enter. There this holy religious remained ill for nearly two months, and at last her life was despaired of by the physicians, but our Lord restored her to health."

Her illness [continues Mary] was a cause of very great grief to me, both from the great affection which I bore to her (a grace which God has always done me, and without my endeavour, of loving well my superiors, because such they were), and from her being the only person to whom until then I had communicated every passage and difficulty concerning my remaining in that place, and from whom I expected in time the decision whether I ought (that is, whether God willed me) to make my profession there or not, not having language enough to confer upon these things with the confessor of the monastery, and there being no custom of calling spiritual persons from without for that purpose.

Mary gave then her whole confidence to her Novice Mistress. But she gained little by this, for the

nun appears neither to have returned her affection nor to have altered the course adopted with regard to her, in spite of the knowledge she thus acquired of Mary's interior and exterior difficulties. This knowledge may, however, have been the means of Mary's removal from under Father Keynes' direction, which had not only caused her many disquietudes during the first months of her Novitiate, but finally assumed, as we shall see, a character quite at variance with the views of the Novice Mistress. Mary says :

The two first months being ended, I was commanded to conform myself to the other nuns and to confess to their confessor, who was a Franciscan monk of the French nation, I knowing at that time but little of that language. Yet, notwithstanding this additional distress, I enjoyed great quiet of conscience, finding on this occasion, and much more in the occurrences of the following years, that when God is sought sincerely, the way to Him is always open, and the pardon of defects committed through frailty easily attained.

Here Mary diverges from the history, to speak of the difficulties she had found in opening her spiritual needs to others. After naming, as an imperfection, that it was her nature to fear being ungrateful or giving displeasure to whoever laboured to do her good, she adds :

I do not remember ever having spoken of the affairs of my soul, through form, to please others, to be esteemed good or intelligent, or for similar unworthy causes, disliking ever every kind of deceit, and, more than all others, to deceive myself. To hear spiritual persons discourse of the things of God, or to treat with them of such matters is to

my taste, but to talk in a certain way, as if I sought or desired their counsel upon things already known and by fitting circumstances determined, and when there is not the *wherefore* for following it, I neither do nor can do, being a deceit too distasteful to myself, and to my mind a certain injury to whoever does it. I have never chosen a person on whom to depend and to whom to confide my soul (of which sort I have had very few, but these such that for every reason I am obliged continually to be grateful to God for them), solely or specially through inclination, however great were their merits and the affection that I bore them, but I have been always led on in such choices by the rule of reason, a peculiar Providence of God, or by some Divine ordering still more marked, and with such as these I have ever treated with all sincerity, without any reserve, as well in matters of detail and of minor moment, as in greater and in the entire government of my soul. And more, so greatly from the first have I loved integrity (proportionate to the occasions) that unless I had gone against my nature, it would have been impossible to me to act by halves in things of the soul, where all is intended and ought to be full and entire. From much which has not caused me to judge otherwise, I should say that the above said dispositions are special gifts of God to whatsoever person, but particularly to those of our sex who seek to walk in the way of the spirit. And for me, as far as I can judge, they have been of extreme use, and have brought me great peace of conscience in so many changes and various accidents as by Divine Providence have happened in my poor life and past years.

There was still one fact which was to Mary the most distasteful drop in her cup of trouble, the circumstances of her case rendering it still more bitter. She had fondly hoped that though not partaking in

the happy life of contemplation enjoyed by the choir nuns, yet that their ascetic rule and practices, those, namely, of St. Clare herself, would equally be hers as a lay-sister. It was a heavy blow when it gradually dawned upon her after her clothing, that the Rule followed by the lay-sisters was that of the Third Order of St. Francis, and a far less severe one than St. Clare's. But this was not all.

I saw [she writes] that the Superioresses of the monastery had told me, with regard to the Rule and Statutes, that which I did not find to be so, and that which had I known beforehand (although good in itself) I should never have entered, from not being conformable to my mind; but now finding myself there (and with every requisite circumstance on my side) the change in the confessor and the kind interest of the nuns did not serve in any way to liberate me from that place, but far more to bind me there until God should by some other means give some more certain sign what I was or was not to do. And so imperfect and human was I, that this, their (to my mind) little correspondence with my great sincerity with them, much increased my suffering, and no other stay remained to me but to have recourse to God more earnestly than ever, Whose unfailing goodness not only gave me courage to go against myself in entering, purely to please Him, but also to endure these extreme distresses, during the whole time that I was there, with such a conformity to and observance of the holy customs of the place that I may venture upon saying that the year, consonantly with human frailty, was passed well.

The change in her confessor, of which Mary here writes, does not mean the change from Father Keynes to the ordinary confessor of the convent, though that

had cost her some embarrassment. There was another cause. At the end of the first eight weeks of her Novitiate another distress arose, which filled up the measure of Mary's perplexities. Her surprising graces had already made a great impression upon others, and before all upon Father Keynes who was still her confessor. "He began to see," says our German biographer, "that there was far more in his penitent than he had at first imagined, and that he had rated her too low. Moreover, he could not but perceive that neither her bodily powers nor her superiority of intellect made her a fitting occupant of the post she now held." It was the talk of all the inhabitants of St. Omer, especially of the upper classes, among whom her virtues were already appreciated, that Mary should be placed in such a situation. It was the theme also of various letters from England, equally deprecatory. These things, added to the increasing knowledge of Mary herself, which he had gained during the two months for which he continued to be her confessor, gave Father Keynes many uneasy thoughts. But Winefrid Wigmore tells us more, and gives us also a little of her own mind as to the whole affair. Father Dominic Bissel, as we shall see, expresses himself in a similar manner.

The former says: "Her dearest and best Master at length showed that the sufferings which His servant endured with so much fidelity and constancy were agreeable to Him, and took her cause in hand and did at once please Himself in her faithful suffrance, and revenge her quarrel, for that religious

man her confessor, as also the religious woman who had proceeded indirectly in that matter, fell both of them dangerously ill, into desperate sicknesses, tormented besides with such remorse of conscience as her remaining persevering in that state seemed their torture." Father Bissel writes that "they," the confessor and Abbess, "were troubled with such a gnawing of conscience that the maiden's remaining in the convent became a torment to them both." "And whereas," continues Winefrid Wigmore, "he," Father Keynes, "had before said it was God's will she should enter, he now assured her that it was God's will she should come out." "What was wonderful," adds our quaint German biographer, "he was himself the angel who, as he had foretold, came from Heaven and gave Mary this contrary advice, telling her expressly that she ought to leave the convent." Mary herself says but these few words: "After the first two months that I entered, the said Father, my confessor, told me that for certain this was not my vocation, &c., which saying of his amazed me, and forced me to fly afresh with great affection to God, which I did with a feeling of certainty that He would not deceive me, nor could be deceived."

No wonder that our poor Mary should be placed in a state of bewilderment and distress by this sudden announcement. Father Keynes had solemnly given her the very opposite decision so short a time previously that her confidence was shaken. She prudently reflected, however, that there were now others as well as himself who ought to be consulted in the matter, and her answer is thus recorded :

But this champion, this "valiant woman," would not let herself be so easily shaken or persuaded, and was not so lightly moved to quit, what once while still being actually her confessor he had so oft and oft assured to be God's will, and this without knowledge of what she was to do, or the state where God would have her, wherefore, discreetly answered, by order she entered and by order she would go out or die a thousand deaths there, not that the practice had rendered it sweet or easy to her, but before she entered she had no guide but her confessor, now the Superiors of the Order were hers, and were to dispose of her, accept, or send her away as seemed good to them.

Thus she left herself once more in God's hands, that He might show His will for her as He pleased, with an entire confidence that He would do so through those he had set over her. Nor was she to be disappointed. Meantime, for the next few months, Mary worked, prayed, and suffered, waiting patiently for her way to be made clear. She writes herself: "I remained in the monastery nearly a year, during the whole of which time the same distresses continued, or rather with augmentation than otherwise, but, through special grace of God, they did not cause me any impediment in the exact observance of the rules and customs practised there. Many notable things passed during these months too long to relate now."

CHAPTER III.

St. Gregory's Day and its Results.

1607.

WHAT, then, were the thoughts over which Mary pondered during these weary months, whilst upon her toilsome journeys up and down the streets of St. Omer, among the floating vegetable gardens of the suburbs, through heat and cold, and, as it must often have been, through rain and snow, dust and mud? She had to provide for the daily wants of an overflowing community, and her thick lay-sister's habit must have hung heavily upon her, loaded as she was with her beggar's wallet, and, for a length of time, with an "impostume" on her knee into the bargain. Surely hers was no heart to be pent up in itself and its own little focus of disagreeables, troubles, and perplexities, or even of anxieties as to the future. She could not so soon and so entirely have forgotten her "own people and her father's house." Nor could the scenes which were being enacted when she left her native country, the blood which had been shed so profusely for the faith, have been blotted out from her memory, nor the bitter troubles and miseries in which those she knew and loved, and thousands of others also, had been and were, perhaps, at that very time involved.

Mary must have had letters from England ; and they, without doubt, would have described the increasing pressure of the penal laws, especially through the hateful oath of allegiance of James the First, the difficulty of evading it, and the ruin or fearful temptation to apostacy to which it exposed whole families, and especially the young among them. We can look back with a comparatively clear light on the difficulties of those days, and we do not easily understand the perplexities of the suffering Catholics, divided as they were among themselves, and the strong influences which were at hand to persuade them to compromise themselves by a partial submission to the heretical government. Mary's own blessed freedom in a Catholic country, with its thousand daily recurring exterior signs of fidelity to the faith, would make the picture all the darker, as she recalled those with whom she had formerly associated, and perhaps dreaded to hear of some of them having faltered or even fallen under the trial. The remembrance also of the far greater numbers who, in England, had already wholly abandoned the religion of their forefathers and become confirmed Protestants, must have risen up before her mind, and made her heart, while it burned for the insulted honour of God, still heavier. But with Mary Ward, to think and to pray were almost one and the same thing.

Let us hear from her own words what further resulted : " Towards the end of this year of probation, on the feast of St. Gregory the Great (my particular advocate), sitting in silence at work with the nuns,

I recited privately certain prayers in honour of that saint, entreating him that as on earth he loved and helped the English, so now in Heaven he would protect and help one of that nation, betaking myself to him that I might live and die in the will of God, and in the state which should most please His Divine Majesty, &c." Winefrid, who must often have heard what happened on this occasion from her own lips, says, that Mary was "offering up certain devotions for the conversion of England, representing to this great saint the graces he on earth had done the said country, begging he would not forget it now," and then adding the petitions for herself. "Scarcely had she ended her prayers, when the bell rung to call the community all together to receive their Father General his blessing, he happening at that time to make his visit there, which falls out but once in six years."

This Father was Andrew Soto, a Spaniard of Old Castile, a Recollet of the Franciscan province of the Conception. He had been a professor of theology, and had several times filled the office of Guardian. He was Commissary General of the Provinces of Strasbourg, Cologne, Ireland, England, Flanders, and Lower Germany. We are told of him, that "he was a man truly wise, prudent, humble, charitable, mortified, and gifted with every virtue."¹ He wrote several spiritual works in Spanish. Father Soto died at Brussels in 1625, and was buried before the altar

¹ *Bibliothèque sacrée*, R. Pères Richard et Giraud, Dominicains, tom. xxiii. p. 194.

of the Holy Cross, which the Archdukes had erected for him.

"When he had done, he called to speak to the English. There being none of the nation but she" (Mary), that is, of course, among the lay-sisters—(but what had become then of Anna Campian, who had been held up to her as a model for imitation, but who must have left, if she ever entered, the outer convent?)—"she presented herself to him." "He spoke to me in private," continues Mary, "and counselled me, with demonstration of great affection, to think well what I ought to do, that the time of my profession drew near, that I was still free and fit to serve God in any state or religion, but having once made my profession I should be obliged to remain, and should have to content myself with the means of perfection which I found there." Adding besides, his own opinion regarding Mary's vocation, he said: "My child, you are not for this state of life, make your choice, I will serve you in whatsoever I can."

Mary knew not how to receive these kind expressions of the good Father, "to which," she writes, "as far as I recollect, I did not say a word in reply, but making my reverence, and showing signs of gratitude, I took my leave, returning to my work and devotions to St. Gregory, when I found myself full of astonishment at the words of the Father General, never having spoken with or even seen him before."

"This was the most unexpected news to her in the world, who had put herself and her whole rest with an abandonment of herself into the hands of the Divine Providence, not casting her

thoughts on any particular, either on one side or the other, but always had an unspeakable zeal for the good of and for assisting England." St. Gregory was not long in answering her, for while still invoking him, "I was on a sudden enkindled," Mary continues, "with a vehement desire to procure a monastery for the English of this Order; but not being able otherwise to moderate this vehemence and place myself in indifference before speaking or doing anything for that purpose, I retired myself alone, and earnestly intreated our Lord God that nothing that I might do in this business should have other success than that which He willed and which should be the most acceptable to Him, praying our most Blessed Lady and other saints to be witnesses that my desires were no other but to do and have done His Divine will."

This prayer was as rapid as it was fervent, for, carried away by the strength of her interior impulses, she resolved to hasten at once to the Father General to obtain his sanction and assistance. "And so not being able further to restrain myself, I went in all haste to entreat the said Father General, that in this visitation of his, he would put two monasteries into one and give one of them to the English; but the Father was not to be found, for he had returned to his convent. And this my simplicity appeared not to displease God, Who afterwards showed more appropriate means, and concurred with them to the entire fulfilment of the desired good." "She would recount to us," adds her friend, "(as she was pleased to term it), her simplicity, thinking wherein the good Father his assistance might contribute to God's ser-

vice. She concluded he might put two monasteries in one, and leave one, in short, that of two monasteries which there were of this Order, he could put all the religious of that country in one, and leave the other for those of the English nation who should desire to become religious of the Order of St. Clare." Laughing at herself when relating the whole matter afterwards, she said that "she proposed" these simple ideas of hers (which were no less than to put the Poor Clares and Urbanists together) "to the General, and this with great sincerity, who said that was a thing he could not do ; but all in his power he would."

"For some weeks before and after" the event just related, the Novice Mistress, ill of fever, had been obliged to reside within the enclosure.

Being through the illness and absence of the said mother deprived of all human aid [proceeds Mary] I turned to God, my only succour, Who without delay, and as if He had awaited a similar privation, favoured me with frequent and clear lights, accompanied with peace and strength of soul far more than I had ever before experienced, showing me that this was not my vocation, and that I could, without scruple, depart from there, with various particular circumstances to assure me of their truth, which now I do not recollect so minutely as to venture to put them in writing. But I remember well that the manner God employed on this occasion was not to command me, or Divinely to force me, but as if, compassionating my labours, He would, with Fatherly affection, propose the means to solace me, leaving me the liberty to use them or not. But not having experience in similar favours, nor knowing how to proceed in them, nor having, as I have said, any one to teach me, I

wrote down from time to time what happened to me concerning them, to show afterwards to the above-named mother, if God should grant me to see her again; and having thus noted them down, I took pains not to think any more of them, fearing that if they absorbed my thoughts I should be less observant of the ordinances and exercises of the place where I was.

These papers, when she was a little recovered and had come out where I was, I gave to her, praying and conjuring her that as she would answer for my soul at the last day, that she would tell me what she judged with regard to my profession there, yes or no; resolving to depend on her decision, who, by her office, was assigned to me as an aid in such things.

Among these papers, if not at an earlier date, Mary would also have confided to the Novice Mistress her views respecting the discovery she had made of the intentions of the nuns and the office in which she was to be placed. She gives her own sentiments upon the matter thus:

The conceit the nuns had of me made them determine, when my Novitiate should be finished, to give me the government of those outside, which had I known, assuredly I should never have entered, having also then, as I remember, a very different idea as to the qualities necessary to govern well, and as to the affection which I might have to such a thing, I can with truth say that from my first vocation to religion (which was, as I have said, about the age of fifteen) until now, I was never capable of any, as some might who leave what is called in the world a position of honour, belonging to their condition.

In spite of these and all the many other repugnances which she felt for the calling in which she was

engaged, Mary left herself with child-like confidence and peace to the decision of the only human guide God had given her. Nor did she trust the interior light she had until confirmed exteriorly, in the ordinarily appointed way.

"After some days the mother returned me my papers, and assured me decidedly that to be there outside, where the Third Rule of St. Francis only was observed, was not my vocation, but I was to take that observed within: the First of St. Clare (an austere and secluded Rule, conformable to my mind) was for certain that which God willed for me." The words which here follow in Mary's manuscript, while they show the strength and fervour of her character, in not swerving one hair's breadth from her duty towards God and in her still relinquishing all choice of her own, manifest clearly that she had not been blind to the painful and dangerous nature of her position, nor to the real views of those she dealt with, though she marvels only and lays no blame at their door. She continues:

While I listened attentively to her discourse, various sentiments passed within me as to the Divine permissions in things touching so nearly the salvation of the soul, and how His Divine Majesty makes use of things less good to arrive at the end determined by Him. I, to have given pleasure to that holy mother according to my natural feeling, would willingly have lived all my life a slave; and she, at all times and on every occasion, appeared to have the least possible regard to me in particular. I treated with her in all sincerity and submitted myself to her judgment, and she, having to determine that which so greatly con-

cerned both my soul and my life, promoted, as if for my welfare alone, that which she sought (and indeed lawfully) for the consolation of others. At entering, she told me that within and without the Rule was the same, and now she explained how much difference there was between the one and the other. Then, if an angel from Heaven should tell me that my vocation was not with those outside, I ought not to believe him, and now such could by no means be, but my vocation was within, &c. All (perhaps through my own defects) appeared to me too human, and very unsuitable to my mind and way of acting.

No wonder that for a moment Mary felt staggered as the events of the past year flashed thus upon her at one glance. It was but for a moment, and her confidence in God returned. She proceeds :

Feeling myself during this silent attention, like a person deprived of help and counsel necessary in such a conjuncture, it occurred to me that on my side I had done all that was possible to me and free from self-interest, to know and to walk in the way pre-ordained for me by God, and that what the mother now said to me was the only guidance which was granted to me, therefore I would embrace it with all affection as the will of God, which *only, only* I desired.

Thus ended Mary's long strife with herself: she had received every necessary sanction ; her superiors as well as her former confessor had spoken. All now agreed with the interior voice which had always told her she was not in the vocation where God would have her to be. She therefore delayed no longer, but acting with the firmness and promptitude which belonged to her character, she at once made up her mind to the

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needful step. "A few days afterwards," she adds, "I left the convent."

It may well be thought that, with a soul so faithful to Him, God was, in a manner, bound to bring about, in His Providence, her deliverance from the false position in which, by no fault of her own, she had been placed. It would have been hard if her whole life had been spoilt by an arbitrary act of a mistaken director. But there are many souls less strong and less faithful to grace than Mary Ward, for whom such acts work almost irreparable mischief, and who emerge at last from communities which they should never have entered, with the discouraging consciousness that they have tried religious life and failed, and with all the disadvantages, in the eyes of others which usually accompany failures for which the persons are themselves responsible.

CHAPTER IV.

A New Inspiration.

1607.

AT the time when Mary Ward left the Convent of Poor Clares at St. Omer—that is, about the month of May or June, 1607—there was only one foundation abroad made expressly for Englishwomen, that of Benedictine nuns at Brussels, which was begun in 1598, by Lady Mary Percy, the youngest daughter of Thomas, Earl of Northumberland, who, as we have already heard, was concerned in the rising in the north for Mary Queen of Scots, and who was beheaded in 1572. There were English nuns, it is true, scattered here and there in the convents of other orders, but none had ever yet separated themselves so as to form distinct communities for their own nation. Such an arrangement was, however, very desirable; for the habits and manners of a foreign country, even within the enclosure, made an ascetic life doubly hard to strangers. There must also have existed as great a dissimilarity between the characters and temperaments of the English and foreign nuns who were in the same cloister, as there was between their way of living and that common in England.

Conventual fare and occupations in the Low

Countries, at the end of the sixteenth century, do not sound very congenial to English tastes and ways. We read of "coarse rye bread, and beer exceeding small," and of the "ordinary fare," being "a mess of porridge, made of herbs called *warremus*," with the addition of "a little piece of black beef, about the greatness of two fingers at dinner. In Lent, only a mess of the same Dutch porridge, half a herring, or such like thing each one, and some little portion of peas dressed with lamp-oil." It was considered a luxury granted afterwards to the weakness of the English, that to those, "one little loaf of wheat-bread each and some oatmeal porridge were allowed every week."¹ Then, as to occupations, the writer of this contemporary manuscript acknowledges that they "were hard for gentlewomen to undergo, as washing of linsey wolsey clothes, which were to be beaten (as the manner is) in such sort, that some of the nuns were sore after the wash-day in all their limbs, as if they had been disjoined; the washing of linen in lye, which fetched off the skin from their fingers; mending the ways of the paved courts within the cloister," and even "helping to weave linen in the looms, which was indeed man's work," adds the manuscript, "and very hard for tender, weak women," and especially we may subjoin for those who were English ladies, whatever the Dutch could accomplish.

The plan, therefore, of separating the English nuns, which Mary Ward was the first to originate,

¹ MS. "Chronicles of St. Monica's, Louvain," in *Troubles, &c.*, series i. pp. 35, 36.

had much practical good sense in it. The thought as it offered itself to her was, as far as we have seen, sudden and unexpected, and confined itself to one enterprize, small in proportion to what might lie behind it. Whatever the future might develope was hidden from her, and the present involved quite enough practical thought and labour to engross her. But how often has the truth of our Lord's words been demonstrated since He uttered them! The little "grain of mustard seed" is too insignificant and unobtrusive outwardly to give any sign to bystanders on earth of the "great tree," which the Almighty Eye has beheld and taken pleasure in from all eternity. It was the description of the devotion of those of her sex abroad which had drawn her to a foreign land. It was the sight of and participation in their holy life which was now leading her on a step farther.

On that feast of St. Gregory of the year 1607, she had begun, almost unconsciously to herself, a new era in her spiritual life: it was by slow degrees, and through other lights given to her by God, that she afterwards learned that He had implanted in her on that day the first germs of her real vocation. Many years subsequently, in her Italian life, as quoted above, she called the care for one's salvation alone, "a parsimony or penuriousness;" at the same time honestly acknowledging, that by her natural disposition she was much more inclined to this penuriousness. On St. Gregory's day her heart awoke to the fact that she could perhaps contribute to the revival of the dying embers of Divine love in the souls of

her countrywomen, by providing larger and more fitting means for attracting them once again to the religious state. She saw that to secure refuge and shelter for the young of her own sex, before they were tempted away by the treacherous poison of misbelief and error, would level a blow at the root of the growing evil in England. But as yet she believed, with regard to herself, that God called her to be a Poor Clare, so gently and gradually was He leading her soul and training it by the severe exercises and abnegation of the ascetic life for the noble and remarkable vocation which He had in store for her.

To return to the course of our history. At the early age of twenty-two, Mary Ward had now become her own mistress, without any one to control or interfere with her, and free therefore to choose and shape her future course as she deemed best, though with this attendant disadvantage, that she was left in a foreign land, with few to whom she could look for counsel or assistance, or for protection in case of difficulty. It must have been rather a desolate moment when the time actually came for the young English girl to leave the shelter of the convent, to live alone in the town of St. Omer ; almost as gloomy as that of her landing in a strange country, with the uncertainty where her lot was to be cast, the year before. But circumstances were changed. Her mind was now fully occupied with a plan, which, if not developed as to detail, was yet very definite to herself in its purport and as to her own intention to leave no means untried to carry it into effect. Her whole

heart was in the project, and her energetic will bent upon its success. We are told that she asked the advice of the Commissary-General of the Franciscans, as well as of others, among whom was the Abbot of St. Bertin's, how she could best set about her purpose, and found out for the first time that it was not so easy a scheme as she imagined, and that, in short, if there were to be an English convent of Poor Clares, it would have to be founded expressly for that object, and that such a design was beset with difficulties. But the knowledge in no way daunted Mary. She had engaged herself in another "venture of faith," and in this, as well as in others subsequently, difficulties but came before her, as they do to great souls, illumined by faith, as things not to cower before, but to be surmounted for the love of God. She adhered unalterably to her design, and commending the matter to Almighty God and to her patron saints with fervent prayers, she pondered over the ways and means best fitted for its commencement.

Mary's thoughts were full of the future, but in bringing her desires and intentions to Almighty God, and seeking His guidance with regard to them, she could not but have reviewed the year just come to an end. Many a thanksgiving was ready on her lips, as conscience witnessed, that as far as human weakness permitted she had passed it well. She seems to have been accustomed at a later date, sometimes to talk over her early days with her companions, and it is one of them who says: "I have often heard her speak of those times with very great content and

satisfaction, saying that she should never die with more assurance and a firmer hope of Heaven than if she had died then, as a time when she had in no way sought herself, but very sincerely, with a sincere and disinterested heart, God."

It was not long before Mary made up her mind upon the immediate steps necessary with regard to the new convent. The first difficulty probably represented to her was, that the population of St. Omer was not sufficiently large to admit of another community dependent upon the alms of the faithful. But while on her begging-rounds as a lay-sister, Mary had heard of a house with land close to Grave-lines lately bequeathed for the commencement of a religious foundation, and she therefore applied for assistance in procuring it to the Bishop of St. Omer,² himself a Franciscan, and also to the Abbot of St. Bertin, and the Rector of the English College. This is the first time that we hear of the Bishop in connection with Mary Ward; though he seems already to have known her well, at least by reputation; we shall afterwards have frequent occasion to mention him. This holy and zealous prelate was a great encourager of the good works carried on in his diocese, by the various religious bodies, and particularly of the English Seminary, and he was on terms of friendship with some of the Jesuit Fathers

² St. Omer had only been erected into a bishopric about fifty years previously, after the town of Therouanne, the seat of the ancient see, had been razed to the ground by Charles V., and its territory divided between France and Spain at the Peace of Chateau Cambresis. James Blaise or Blaze occupied the see from the year 1600 to 1618.

there. The latter had lent a kind and ready ear to Mary Ward's plans. They had become aware how much such a religious house was needed as that she sought to found, but many difficulties lay in the way of its establishment. In their Annual Letter from the College for 1608, they thus write of the need and of Mary herself, as well as of her difficulty, in the following terms :

Many ladies of high birth, remarkable alike for personal and mental gifts, and not without wealth, coming here with the idea of entering religion are strengthened and their vocations matured, and then sent either to places further on, or else admitted into the convents of the city. Many others, moved by their example, flock here to such an extent that there is no room to admit them, so that we had begun to think of erecting some building for the purpose. On our proposing the matter to our religious friends and others, it was rejected by all as ridiculous. We are nevertheless unwilling to desist. There was in the city a certain English virgin (who was the first to start the idea) furnished with excellent gifts both of piety, talent, and courage of heart, and entirely under the direction of Ours. Grieved that nothing was done, she declared herself sent by God as an instrument to begin and carry out the work to completion.³

From the Fathers, or from Bishop Blaise, Mary would soon have learned that she could not obtain possession of the desired house at Gravelines, nor use it for a religious foundation, without the concurrence of the heads of the State, and of the local authorities through them, as well as of the Bishop of Ypres, in whose diocese it was situate. Bishop

³ St. Omer's College, Annual Letter, 1608.

Blaise probably promised Mary to negotiate with this prelate on the subject, and so well did he perform his part, that we learn "the Bishop of Ypres not only protected and approved the undertaking but promised it his own personal aid."

Neither Bishop Blaise nor the Fathers would be backward in their praises of the Archdukes, and there was no difficulty in petitioning sovereigns concerning a religious foundation, whose piety and liberality towards the religious orders were known far and wide through their dominions. Albert's sister, Margaret of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II., was herself a Poor Clare in Madrid, and he was likely, therefore, to regard that Order with a kindly eye. We do not hear whether it was Mary's own thought originally, or whether it was by the recommendation of others, that she determined to go to Brussels to plead the cause of the new foundation in person. By what followed it seems very likely to have been entirely her own plan. Tongues were very busy at St. Omer, some maintaining one opinion as to the foundation, some another, and this even among her own friends, the Fathers and the religious. Mary lost no time in debating, but having obtained the Bishop's sanction, travelled without delay to Brussels. Before leaving St. Omer, however, she secured the purchase of the house in the village of Ecchelstbeker, outside Gravelines. This was done by the intervention of the English Fathers with the Count de Guernonval, Governor of the latter town, and Mary paid the agreed sum, which was ten thousand florins, the greater part probably of her own dower.

CHAPTER V.

Mary at the Court of the Archdukes.

1607.

MARY WARD could not have been destitute of good commendatory letters at Brussels, both from St. Omer and from her friends in England, as her connection with numerous families known abroad for their devotion to the Catholic faith would have stood her in good stead at the Court there. The attainted Countess of Northumberland had lived and died in the Low Countries, one of the many pensioners on the bounty of Spain, since the rebellion of 1569, and her daughter, Lady Mary Percy, to whom Mary Ward was related, was now a professed nun, and a few years afterwards was made Abbess of the Benedictine Convent at Brussels. It was probably to this convent that she first directed her steps, and where she finally fixed her temporary abode. Lady Mary was well known to the Infanta Isabella, and Mary may have obtained her personal introduction to the sovereigns through her. Isabella had interested herself in this English community, and her acts of kindness towards it and innumerable others of a similar nature, were doubtless known to Mary Ward, and encouraged her in her present enterprise.¹

¹ See Note I. to Book II.

Kindheartedness and liberality were prominent features in the characters of both Isabella and Albert. Whatever may have been the mistakes or errors of these Sovereigns in the government of their kingdom, they cannot be laid to their own personal want, either of these attractive qualities, or of the highest principle and the most sincere religion. But they were too devotedly Catholic to please a liberal and free-thinking posterity. Of Isabella we learn, that "the sick and needy, hospitals, churches and monasteries alone knew that she was rich. The hours that she passed every day in prayer, reading spiritual books, and meditation, never interfered with the time set apart for public business. When on her knees before the crucifix, she remembered her cares of Government only to recommend them to God; when seated at her *escritoire*, which was loaded with letters, with petitions, memorials, despatches of all kinds, to be read and answered, signed or dismissed, her union with God did not hinder the attention she gave to all that she did."²

The Archduke was no less pious than Isabella. His sister, the Poor Clare, used to say that their holy mother, Mary of Austria, who had implanted

² *Pourtrait en petit d'Isabelle Claire Eugénie, Infante d'Espagne*, pp. 27, 16. Par le Sieur de Morgues S. Germain. Paris, 1650. Written at the command of her niece, Anne of Austria, the Queen Regent of France. "She went on foot, torch in hand, at the long public processions usual in the Low Countries, and neither sun, wind, rain, nor snow would prevent her from leaving her carriage to follow the Blessed Sacrament to the homes of the sick, when she would mount up to the most miserable garret, or accompany It into the most infected rooms, nor leave It until It was replaced in the tabernacle" (p. 24).

in him a great and filial fear of God, taught her children, as Queen Blanche of France did St. Louis and St. Isabella, to have an extreme horror of mortal sin. This horror Albert retained through his whole life. One of his panegyrists said of him, that "his greatest happiness was to lay the stone of a church."³ "The smallest details were important to the devotion of the Archdukes," writes the same author, a fact abundantly proved by the daily entries of their expenses in the archives of the kingdom. Among these day-book entries of the year 1615, they had, in three days of one month, expended no less than sixteen thousand florins on pious purposes.⁴

Mary Ward was now bent on obtaining the favour of these pious princes in behalf of the projected convent. A lengthened residence at the capital therefore became necessary, besides mixing in some measure with the Court, and the moment was perhaps favourable, as the truce had just been signed between the Protestant States and the Catholic Netherlands, which was followed by the twelve years' peace signed in 1609. It was a bold undertaking for a beautiful young girl of twenty-two, separated from her family and alone in a foreign country. There was scarcely one among the European Courts where such an enterprize would have prospered. But that of Brussels was an exception. Its characteristics were Spanish; Spanish costumes and manners were predominant there, and we are told that "although the

³ Quoted in *Albert et Isabelle, Fragments sur leur regne*. Ch. Potvin, pp. 149, 157.

⁴ See Note II.

festivals, dances, banquets, and tourneys were all very magnificent, the prevailing expression of the Brabantine capital resembled that of a convent, so severely correct, as well as stately, was the demeanour of the Court."⁵ "Who can here express," continues Winefrid Wigmore, "the courage with which this holy amazon undertook this second encounter? Wholly confident in God, thus young and of exquisite beauty, she put herself to negotiate in the Archduke his Court for a foundation of a monastery of St. Clare's Order for the English nation."

But even if these splendid scenes of pleasure at the Court had not been tempered down and held in check by the grave religious principles of the Sovereigns, Mary was herself inwardly fortified in a manner which made her impervious to their attractions. God had given her so powerful and enduring a sense of the nothingness of all the gifts that the world has to bestow, that she says herself that she "*could not seek after them.*" A few years only afterwards, in reviewing God's goodness towards her, she writes: "I, that should best know, find cause to fear that if God had given less, I should have left Him, or at least the best way to serve Him. I am persuaded one principal means of my continuance" (*i.e.* perseverance), "hath been the little satisfaction I could take in any worldly contentment, sometimes by a sight that these were insecure, uncertain, and short, but for the most part without any reasons why, only that I could not affect them nor find repose in them."

⁵ Motley's *History of the United Netherlands*, vol. iii. p. 553.

As the history proceeds, one of the especial reasons becomes apparent, which led Mary to visit Brussels in person in order to obtain the patronage of the Archdukes. Her own experience in the convent at St. Omer had taught her, not only the trials of a temporal nature, but also those in spiritual matters to which her countrywomen were liable to be exposed in entering the religious state abroad. Among these the want of a confessor of their own nation, who could not only speak their own language, but also understand and feel with their difficulties, especially at a time of great national distress, may perhaps not be reckoned the least. At the present period, the English Franciscan Province was in abeyance, and Father John Gennings, its reviver, had not yet entered the Order. Without some special provision, therefore, the new convent would pass at once under the direction of the Belgian Franciscans, and consequently would have to receive confessors who were foreigners. It is probable that Mary discussed this point with Bishop Blaise, himself, as we have seen, a Franciscan, and obtained his cooperation in the endeavour to place the new foundation under the Bishop of the diocese, an arrangement by no means without precedent, and which would prevent the contingency she sought to avoid.

The veneration which for so many years she had entertained towards Father Holtby, and what she knew of the Society of Jesus, must have naturally caused her to wish that the new colony from England which she hoped would quickly people the projected monastery, should be placed under the direction of

the Fathers of the English College. The intimate knowledge which Bishop Blaise had of their merits would have aided her in the attempt. Without his previous concurrence she could not have mooted the question at Brussels, or have faced the opposition which met her there on the subject. But in his intercourse with Mary, Bishop Blaise seems, at an early date, to have penetrated the beauty and holiness of her character, and to have become her fast friend.

It was not by mere accident that Mary's biographer names the Archduke as the Sovereign to whom she principally applied at this time. Albert was an especial patron of the Society of Jesus.⁶ During his sovereignty no less than twenty-five of their houses and three hundred colleges were established in the Netherlands, to most of which he contributed, and he gave them besides Charles V.'s magnificent palace at Malines for one of their foundations. There was the greater reason for Mary to obtain Albert's good will through the Jesuit Fathers, as the opposition, which no doubt she foresaw, and which was strongly brought to bear against her request, did not arise from the Fathers of the Franciscan Order only. It was headed by no less a person than her kind friend, Father Andrew Soto, the Commissary-General, who held the influential post of confessor to the Infanta, and who resided at the Court. This opposition was by no means without

⁶ He held his contemporary, the celebrated Jesuit, Father Leonard Lessius, in such esteem, that he was in the habit of always keeping his work, *De justitia et jure*, on his table, and of saying that that book and his sword were the defenders of justice.

reason, for exemptions such as that sought for were only occasionally granted, either from necessity, or from the peculiarity of the circumstances. Mary must have felt well assured of the importance of what she urged, and must have had great confidence also in Bishop Blaise and the Bishop of Ypres, to have persisted so courageously in her demand, contrary to the wishes of the head of the Order in that part of Europe, of one, too, held in such high estimation for his wisdom and holiness, whose paternal words to herself had been like a God-send in the midst of her distresses.

No wonder that in the words of the Annual Letter, already quoted, "a storm, or rather many storms arose." But Mary persevered, at the expense doubtless of personal feeling, and subsequent results fully justified her course. Winefrid Wigmore says in a few words: "Her aim being not to have the new monastery under the direction or government of the Fathers of the Order, had them all to oppose her, and which was immediately the worst, the Commissary-General living in the Court and confessor to the Archduchess. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, she obtained her pretensions, to the great astonishment of the two parties, and to the admiration both of those who had so powerfully resisted her as well as of friends, and this in the space of six months."

One other obstacle had also assumed a formidable aspect.⁷ "By the advice of the Most Rev. Maes,

⁷ From a manuscript letter by Bishop Blaise, written by him in "commendation of the pious way of life of the English Virgins of St. Omer," in the archives of the Society of Jesus at Rome. *Anglia*, Hist. 1590—1615.

Bishop of Ypres, of pious memory, our most Serene Princes would permit the establishment of the new community only on the three following conditions, to wit: 1. That for safety's sake, they should live within' some fortified town. 2. That they should not quest, nor be mendicant. 3. That they should remain subject to the Ordinary." By the first of these conditions Mary was deprived of the power of making use of the house outside Gravelines, which she had already purchased, and in which she had sunk her dower. To re-sell and find another suitable building was no easy matter. Mary, doubtless, considered such a hindrance a very minor matter, compared to the arduous task of reconciling men's minds to an act wholly at variance with their wishes and pre-conceived ideas. "Every difficulty, however, was vanquished," says the Annual Letter from St. Omer, "by the generous efforts of the aforesaid lady, and by the advice and exertion of ours, especially of the Rector." This kind friend of Mary Ward's, Father Giles Schondonchus,⁸ undertook to negotiate with the Governor of Gravelines, for the exchange of the house at Ecchelstbeker, for land within the town, which was finally effected. A convent had, however, to be built on the site obtained.

Such rapid success, and that in the face of very formidable difficulties, causes us to turn once more

⁸ Rector of the English College at St. Omer from 1600 to 1617, when he died. "He possessed great zeal for souls, but especially manifested it towards the most afflicted kingdom of England for the conversion of which he strove both by labours and prayers" (Letter of Rev. John Wilson announcing his death, in the Archives de l'Etat, Brussels).

to look at the instrument employed by Almighty God in carrying out His loving designs. He was putting great gifts into Mary's hands. How was she answering to the graces so plentifully showered upon her? Winefrid Wigmore will answer this question: "In which times and occasions," she writes, "she (Mary) used great prayer, much fasting, and great penance, living with admirable edification and grace to all sorts of persons to admire in her, her modesty, courage, prudence, and perseverance." She had a double passport at the Court in her personal beauty and sweetness of manners, united to the shining lustre of virtues which carried weight with both friends and enemies on a thousand different opportunities. Her own account of the transaction connected with the new foundation is given very characteristically. We hear nothing of the toil and labour, the contrarieties, the wearisome negotiations, the vexatious opposition of others, the difficulties of her position in the midst of a Court where personally she was an utter stranger. All these, together with her own wonderful power in winning the goodwill of those in high place and authority, and gaining the consent of those who differed from her, the patience and perseverance, the singleness of eye with which she kept her end in view, namely the will and glory of God—all are concealed in the two rapid sentences which give the facts, and attribute the whole success to Him alone. The period Mary is describing extends from the time she left the French Poor Clares until the new monastery at Gravelines was entered upon.

Putting on a secular dress, without further delay, I applied myself to procure a habitation and all else to found a monastery of St. Clare for the English. In that work, God knows I did little, but His Divine Majesty supplied all my deficiencies in such a manner, that in the space of two years, a little more or less, a convenient site was found, a spacious monastery and church built, English nuns of that Order taken out of other monasteries to preside in it, and persons of fitting qualities and talents admitted on probation.

And now Mary proceeds to tell of God's mysterious dealings with herself, and the wonderful effects of grace in her soul, at a time when He was so eminently blessing her exterior work.

During these two years I suffered extreme aridity without any intermission, and without any cause, but I believed most firmly that I had wholly lost the spirit of devotion and the sensible affection that I used to feel, through some unknown negligence of mine in the Divine service, which thought caused me great grief, and sometimes fear whether I should be saved or not, but this never with doubt or distrust in the Divine mercy, only I feared myself, lest I should thus fall away for ever. By an especial grace this fear was nevertheless always accompanied by a firm resolution, followed by acts whenever the occasion occurred, that although I might never see God, yet I would serve Him until death; and especially I would do all that was possible to me to carry out this work, which it appeared to me He had placed in my hands. And from these sufferings and the above-named acts sprang great love and desire to labour without reward, that giving me the most satisfaction which was done unseen. And because God's cooperation was great, and the success beyond expectation,

all gave me generally too much commendation and attributed to me what was not mine, for no one better knows how little is given of their own in the accomplishment of such works, by those who to the world appear to do the most in them. But I being, as abovesaid, otherwise interiorly disposed, did not in any way care for such praises, nor do I even remember that they gave me any disturbance, appearing to me only as the guesses and conceits of men, beside the truth and without reality.

At that time I confessed to that Father of the Company (of Jesus) through whose advice I entered the first monastery, as it appeared to me ingratitude, and in a certain way depreciatory to him personally, when I came out and was free to take another, there being no further need to treat of my vocation, as therein I was following punctually what the above-mentioned Mother had said to me. This Father was truly of great goodness of life and no less solicitous for the progress of my soul, but he guided my conscience entirely by the way of fear ; for instance, that I ought to hate myself, to fear the judgments of God, to tremble at the pains of Hell, in all which I was most inapt. As to the first, I could not sensibly hate the enemy of all good, much less myself, whom I loved so far too well. To labour through love even until death appeared to me easy, but fear with me made little impression, Hell, I was resolved, by the assistance of God's grace, never to merit, and of the doings there I could form no conception so vivid as the Father wished, and the finding myself so differently disposed from that which he required, and which I therefore with all diligence sought to be, was I believe in great measure the cause of that aridity and those doubting thoughts. Perhaps he did this, that the good success of the business I had in hand might not cause me injury, and whichever way, through his merits it proved, as I hope, for my profit.

Here Mary Ward gives some excellent advice from her own experience, suitable to those who, having little insight or experience of the variety of the human mind, can find no other way but to crush the natural disposition and stamp out its defects, in order to make room for the good seed of virtues. Such persons are afterwards sometimes surprised or disappointed at their failure in developing fruits of grace, or vocations to labour for God's glory, lost perhaps for ever, when the cause in some measure lay with themselves.

Through this occasion I have sometimes thought (perhaps I am deceived) that there are some souls, not the less fit to arrive at a more than ordinary perfection, who in their commencements it would be well to treat with great generosity, giving them better things before taking from them that which is less good, changing the object not destroying the nature, especially if their defects proceed from extreme self-love, or less well-ordered affections, proceeding from that part of the soul.

"I could easily enlarge upon this," adds Mary, in her great humility pointing the moral most untruly to herself, "and perhaps not without reason, having experienced much in this particular, but there is no need." What gentleness and tenderness had she not learned for the future guidance of others, by a treatment which cost so much to herself!

CHAPTER VI.

The New Convent.

1607, 1608.

WHILE preliminaries were being arranged, both Mary herself and her plans became the theme of conversation at the Archducal Court. Her devout and exemplary life were soon known and valued by the pious sovereigns and those who resembled them in their fervour; and many English ladies who, with their families, were either living there as a safe refuge from the persecutions at home, or who were already acquainted with Mary in England, became eager aspirants for admission into the proposed convent. Her residence at the Benedictine Convent enabled her to carry on her religious practices without disturbance, and at the same time afforded her an opening to make the arrangements still wanting, before the new monastery was wholly provided with all that she had planned for it in regard to its spiritual needs. Doubtless commendatory letters from St. Omer had brought her into communication with Father William Baldwin, Vice-Prefect of the Jesuit English Mission. That Father was extraordinary confessor to the Benedictine Nuns during

the ten years that he resided at Brussels,¹ and Mary probably partook of the benefit of his ministrations at the convent, while he on his side had the opportunity of learning her character and the details of her projected foundation. The result was that he gave the necessary permission that the new convent should be directed by the English Fathers at St. Omer.

At the end of six months Mary found herself in a position to return to St. Omer, not only with every hope fulfilled concerning the foundation itself, but also with the prospect of a promising party of young postulants, all ardently desirous of embracing the holy and severe life which was to be practised there. Minor difficulties concerning the site for the new convent still remained to be settled. As late as June 1, 1608,² the English Ambassador at Brussels, Sir Thomas Edmondes, thought it worth while to mention the affair in his correspondence with the Lord High Treasurer, the Earl of Salisbury. After lamenting over "the new plantation of another body of Jesuits at Louvain," and their obtaining "the gift

¹ An old manuscript belonging to the Benedictine Nuns at East Bergholt, the representatives of those at Brussels, says of him: "He greatly assisted the holy work of erecting this monastery. He also exceeding advanced its spiritual good by most holy instructions, sermons, and all possible care and best assistance. Almighty God be blessed Who granted our monastery his religious help for ten years, when His Divine Majesty called him to suffer and do great things for the Catholic faith, enduring imprisonments, racks, and tortures in the Tower of England. He died a most saint-like death in 1632, being Rector of the English College, St. Omer."

² Manuscript letter, P.R.O. in *Flanders Correspondence*, 1608, pp. 604, 605.

of an ancient fair and well seated abbey called Watten, where they intend to settle a great commonwealth, and how dangerous this neighbourhood may be to his Majesty's State, your lordship can best judge," he adds :

The Jesuits did also lately set in hand one Mistress Ward, to sue for leave to set up a house of Poor Clares, near unto Gravelines, though they be furnished of other colleges for English nuns both in this town and in Louvain [that is, St. Ursula's, Louvain, which was not, however, an English convent]. But I understand that some difficulties hath been as yet made to grant them that leave, for fear to burden the country overmuch with the relieving of them. And if this liberty be allowed to set up daily new houses in this manner, it will serve more and more to authorize and enable these people to continue their practices against his Majesty's State. The most of them that were dealers in the Gunpowder Treason are, as your lordship knoweth, now resident here.

A further letter from the Ambassador, written June 29, says :³

I understand that answer is made to Mrs. Ward, who, as I certified your lordship by my former letters, hath been set in hand by the Jesuits to sue for leave to erect near unto Gravelines a house of Poor Clares, for English nuns, that because the place which they proposed is inconvenient and unsafe, in respect of being out of a town, therefore that if they shall find the means to plant themselves in a town, and also to give security as they have promised, not to be burdensome unto the country where they shall remain, that the liberty shall be granted which they desire. So as it may appear unto your lordship how favourable this place is unto those people to afford them nurseries for all sorts of orders.

³ *Ibid.* p. 627.

Bishop Blaise's letter quoted above gives the information that it was the Father Rector and the other Fathers of the English College who finally obtained another site at Gravelines from the governor. Edward Gage,⁴ of Bentley, in Sussex, a pious Catholic, named in some of the spies' lists as a receiver and harbourer of priests, father of one of the postulants, is mentioned as giving money for the nuns' church. Besides this some of Mary's fortune seems to have been sunk in building the convent, to which, without doubt, the Archdukes also in some way contributed.

The delay concerning the land preventing the likelihood of the new convent being ready for habitation under the interval of a year at least, Mary obtained leave from the Bishop to begin community life at once with her companions at St. Omer. She writes :

Many English having already come out of England with the resolution of entering the monastery, that time might not be lost, a large and convenient house was fitted for the interim in the city of St. Omer, and so arranged that they might observe therein all religious discipline and live in full observance of that holy rule, so austere in itself, and carried out in that monastery with entire rigour and perfection.

Winefrid says that it was "the severest rule of St. Clare extant in the Church which this blessed woman used all diligence under Heaven to get, and it was sent to her by the Duchess of Feria." This lady, with whose family, if not with herself, Mary

⁴ His landed property, as being a recusant, was given by King James in 1605 to the Earl of Southampton, "to make profit of."

would be well acquainted, was Jane Dormer, half-sister of the first Lord Dormer. She married the Duke of Feria when he was the Spanish Ambassador in England in the reign of Mary the First, and became one of the ladies of the Court in Spain. When the Queen, Isabella of France, the Archduchess Isabella's mother, died in 1658, she assisted at her funeral. The constant intercourse carried on between the Flemish and Spanish Courts aided Mary in obtaining what she sought. It was her desire in founding the new convent to establish in it the most exact observance of the rule of St. Clare as it originally was instituted by the Saint herself. There had been several convents of Poor Clares founded in Spain before St. Clare's death, upon the rule given to her by St. Francis, and therefore before the time of Innocent IV., who authorized it afresh, and promulgated besides a slightly mitigated form of it in 1246. It was this first ancient rule, with all its traditions and all its severities, as observed in the Spanish convents of the Order, which Mary Ward was bent on finding, and which she obtained from the pious Duchess, then still alive, though advanced in age.

In order that the new foundation might be completed as speedily as possible, and that the religious training of the postulants might begin at once, at Mary Ward's request the Bishop asked permission from the Holy See that five of the nuns from the "Walloon monastery" at St. Omer should be transferred to that of Gravelines, one of them being Mother Mary Stephana Gough, or Googe, Mary Ward's late Novice-Mistress, who, as Mary mentions

was "selected on account of her great merits and superior mind," to be their Abbess. The Abbess at St. Omer prized this nun so highly as to be most unwilling to part with her, and indeed refused to let her go, relenting only finally upon a threat of excommunication. Of the four others, two were lay-sisters. The two choir nuns, were Sister Lucy Darell and her cousin, Sister Clare Fowler.

Nothing was now wanting to prevent the pious English girls from entering upon their holy way of life.

As a beginning [writes Mary] both the religious already taken from the other monastery to govern the new one, as well as those still seculars, made the Spiritual Exercises, each for the space of a month. Which, that they might make them with more profit, I procured that Father W. Baldwin, of the Company of Jesus, then Provincial of the English Mission, should assign some Father in the college of that nation in the city to aid in grounding them in spiritual things, who nominated Father Roger Lee, of happy memory (a man truly apostolic and much illumined and favoured by God), who charitably accepted the burden, and when the said Exercises commenced, I among the rest began also to confess to him, whose aid to the great profit of my soul, I was so happy as to have for ten years together.

Father Roger Lee was at this time Father Minister at the English College. It was said of him in the Annual Letter of the College after his death, that "he so mingled severity with sweetness, that whilst he was feared he was loved by all." He is elsewhere spoken of as endowed with great and extraordinary graces. From his youth he had an exceeding love

for souls. At that period of his life he was of eminent service to Father John Gerard in his missionary labours in England, even while intent upon hunting and hawking and other sports, like the rest of the young men of his day. His remarkable escapes from the pursuivants in company with that Father when making the Spiritual Exercises to ascertain his vocation, are well known. In after years he had an especial gift of directing those who went through the Exercises, and he introduced the practice of making them among the elder students of the College, many religious vocations resulting from them in consequence. Father John Gerard writes of Father Lee in 1606,⁵ that "he is so profitable where he is that it will not be easy to find another who will do so much good in that place; and in one word to express my opinion, for aught I see, the most good of the house, both for external discipline and for progress in spirit, dependeth upon his care and effectual industry. The Fathers which be there do very well, but are not of like apprehension and proceedings." It was no wonder that Mary rejoiced that the providence of God had sent so skilful a director for the young foundation.

The recollection being ended, and all desiring to put their hand to the work, it was settled that the seculars should take the probationers' habit, but not formally, nor in public, as that solemnity was to be celebrated in the new church.

The new-comers were therefore clothed about Christmas eve, and from that time the most exact

⁵ Stonyhurst MSS. *Angl.* vol. vi.

observance of St. Clare's rule was set on foot in the temporary dwelling at St. Omer. The ancient register of the convent at Gravelines gives the following list of the first nuns professed there, that is in 1610. After naming the five nuns from the St. Omer house, there follow, Mary Parker, Frances John Walleston, C. M. Ann Tildesley, Agnes J. Knightley, Christina James Bramfield, Mary Giffard, Collet Gage, M. Mag. Bentley, who were therefore fellow novices with Mary Ward.

How joyful was Mary, wearied out with her six months' contest with the world and its ways, when the door of the hired house at St. Omer was closed upon her, and she was left in her beloved solitude with the few congenial souls who had fled to it for like reasons with herself! She could not but rejoice, besides, at the wonderful manner in which Almighty God had blessed her enterprise, and had disposed the hearts of so many of His servants to help it forward and bring it to perfection. Her time for active work was, to all appearance, ended, every arrangement being completed for the well-being of the Gravelines foundation, and she at once gladly placed herself, as if but one of the newly arrived postulants, in the hands of her Superiors, to be trained for the life of prayer and contemplation for which she had so long craved. "As she was wont to recount," says Winefrid Wigmore, "speaking of her feelings, terming it self-love that made her take so much satisfaction in this freedom from all disturbance, how glad she was to be at rest, and out of the noise and negociation of the world, and what content she had to think the time

would come when it would be a mortal sin for her to put foot over the threshold." Such was the spirit with which Mary entered upon the Spiritual Exercises during Advent; she was to be clothed with the rest in the habit of the Choir Novices at Christmas. She asked for nothing more.

But Mary had in fact, as a lay-sister, already gone through as hard a year's novitiate, and as thoroughly approved herself to her Superiors in it, as any Poor Clare could be supposed to do before profession. So thought the Bishop of St. Omer, as he looked back at the year and a half just past and recalled all he knew of Mary, first of all, in the toils and hardships and the thousand disagreeable encounters to which her lay-sister's life had exposed her. Then during the last six months of brilliant success at the Court, drawing every eye upon her by qualities which command the world's admiration, unmoved she won her way to the accomplishment of her pious undertaking, by virtues and holiness of life, which she did her best to conceal. And now, on her return, in happy tranquillity she was taking her place among the other applicants for the habit, as though she possessed no merit or claim beyond the common crowd. As the final judge of her fitness for profession, he was already sufficiently assured of her virtues.

The Bishop determined then to take a step with regard to her, to which, as the ecclesiastical Superior of the convent he had every right, and to obtain the consent of the new Abbess, Mother Mary Stephana, that Mary should be at once professed. Knowing

the great esteem which Mary had for the Abbess, the Bishop concluded it was mutual, and probably expected that it would be sufficient for him to make the request, and that it would be immediately granted. Mary tells us in her own way what ensued.

The Bishop, Mgr. Jacques Blaise, a prelate much celebrated for learning and holiness of life, of the Order of the Friars Minor, under whose jurisdiction I had placed that monastery,⁶ wished in every way that I should make my profession immediately, without waiting, or another novitiate, which he proposed from the affection he bore me, as a particular privilege and a certain sort of reward for the little labour I had had in this commencement, &c. But the Abbess, who was the same who had been my Superior in the other monastery, inclined greatly to the contrary, alleging to me that the said Monseigneur would come in person to consecrate the church of the new monastery (which was in the city of Gravelines, a day's journey distant from St. Omer), and to give the habit to all who were to enter, if I waited until that time, but otherwise not, and that therefore to defer my profession would be more for the service of God and the good of that foundation.

In spite of the pains which Mary Ward takes to impress upon her readers the great merits of this servant of God, it cannot but be remarked that there was a certain hardness of character and rigorism in Mother Mary Stephana, which led to her cold, almost stern treatment of Mary, and to a want of tenderness and sympathy towards her, which she showed on every occasion. Mary is too full of an intense

⁶ This was probably temporary only until the removal to Gravelines, when the convent would have been in the diocese of Ypres.

appreciation of God's loving Providence in her own regard to notice this here. Indeed, as before, she tries rather to attribute all to the Abbess's anxiety for the welfare of the community at large. She continues—

And here may be seen anew the greatness of my obligation to God, Who willed to make use of every occasion for my greater good. If the designs of this holy Bishop had taken effect, the happiness which I now unworthily possess would have been prevented; and the pious desires of the Abbess for the common good served most perfectly to advance mine in particular.

To his surprise, Bishop Blaise found that his proposal was not at all favourably received by the Abbess, and he therefore opened a communication with the English Fathers, as capable from their knowledge of Mary of forming a wise judgment on the question. "Father Roger, my confessor, with the Rector (Father Schondonch), and other Fathers of the College," writes Mary, "were all adverse to my longer waiting." But the Abbess had struck the right chord in Mary's heart. The greater glory of God, the good of others, especially where her own self-abasement was in question, were motives which had irresistible power over her. She adds: "But they (the Fathers) were actuated by a certain reputation of mine, of which I had already had too much, and more than I cared; therefore to diminish it, and to atone in earnest for whatever I had lost during that time of negotiation in which I remained at my own liberty, having God alone for a guide and instructor in the said matter, and as I could submit

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myself to an entire subjection, I referred myself to what the Abbess judged for the best."

It was in vain that the Bishop made the request a personal matter, and even visited the convent on purpose, entreating the Abbess by word of mouth to accede to it, and showing great dissatisfaction at its rejection. Mother Mary Stephana was not to be moved, but, fortified by Mary's acquiescence, "would not admit of it," maintaining that all the new subjects should enter alike, "to the Bishop his much discontent," adds Winefrid. He had therefore to submit, though very unwillingly, for he "had urged it to have been done the very day of her taking the habit. This might and was," continues Mary's friend, "by diverse interpreted to evil sense in the Abbess, but doubtless it was God's Divine Providence, Who had His blessed and high designs in this His dear and singularly selected servant."

And so [proceeds Mary in the history of herself] I put on the habit with the others, continuing in the exact observance of that Rule until all were about to go to the other monastery to be clothed solemnly, which was a year or thereabouts. Which austerity and retirement were exceedingly to my content, and as far as I remember nothing then could have disturbed me or given me cause of temptation, except to hear that there was some Order in the Church of God more austere and more secluded, in which two virtues I had, at least in theory, placed the whole of perfection. I fulfilled the observance with all my heart and affection, ashamed sometimes to find myself before the others at the sound of the bell, fearing thus tacitly to accuse them of tepidity. And so full was I of human respect that I

was obliged to do violence to myself in performing that which was my duty, and was most to my taste, and to write down as a good resolution to be observed, that as God through His goodness had called me with the first, I would not show myself so ungrateful as to be among the last in due observance.

In that monastery they live with great strictness: they never eat meat even when ill, their food is poor in quality, and they never eat more than once a day, except on the day of the Nativity of our Lord. They sleep on straw mattresses; instead of linen, rough coarse cloth is worn; what may be called continual silence is kept; they rise at midnight, say the long Divine Office, and always make an hour of mental prayer after matins before returning to rest. For my part, during the whole of that year I rarely slept more than two hours during the night, from the hunger I felt.

Every one had half an hour in the day to spend as they liked, in resting, praying, writing, reading, &c., which time I used to pass in praying for the prosperity of Holy Church, and particularly for the perfection of Religious Orders and for the advancement of new foundations among them. God was liberal in inspiring me with other similar little devotions, and in giving me grace to correspond with them, of which there is no need to write.

Thus peacefully did Mary's new novitiate proceed. "I began," she elsewhere writes,⁹ "to feel a great tranquillity of mind, often comforted to think that, after an eleven years' withholding and turbation, the rest of my days should be spent in quiet and with God alone." But in the beginning of the fifth month, the scene was all at once changed in a very remarkable manner.

⁹ Manuscript letter to the Nuncio Albergati, Nymphenburg Papers.

Having passed four or five months in this place and at these exercises, and enjoying great peace of mind and interior consolation, I was sitting at work among the other nuns on the day of St. Athanasius, the second of May, about ten o'clock of the forenoon, being employed in making certain cords of St. Francis for the use of the religious, and reciting privately, as I was accustomed to do at each one that I made, the Litanies of our most Blessed Lady, that whoever should wear that cord might never commit mortal sin, when there happened to me a thing of such a nature that I know not, and never did know, how to explain. It appeared wholly Divine, and came with such force that it annihilated and reduced me to nothing; my strength was extinguished, and there was no other operation in me but that which God caused; to see intellectually what was done and what was to be fulfilled in me, I willing or not willing, was all that remained to me. The suffering was great, because the violence was so far beyond my powers, and the consolation was greater to see that God willed to make use of me in what pleased Him best. Here it was shown to me that I was not to be of the Order of St. Clare; some other thing I was to do, what or of what nature I did not see, nor could I guess, only that it was to be a good thing, and what God willed.

The bell for examen was rung as usual before eating, which was to my content, for thus I had time to be alone to return to myself, in order that the others might not see any difference in me, &c. But what I say is far too disproportionate to what passed on this occasion, and in no way to my satisfaction, nor will it be to those who read it; may God supply what is wanting as far as it will be to His service.

Mary adds concerning the occurrence in another place:

The change and alteration this wrought for half an hour or more was extraordinary. I saw not anything, but understood more clearly that this was to be so than if I had seen or heard it spoken.

Winefrid Wigmore, writing from what she and her companions had heard from Mary, gives the account of what passed in much the same words, saying: "She knew by what passed within her interiorly that that state of life was not what she was to honour God by, but that He had chosen her for another, very much to God's honour, greatly for His glory and for the utility of her neighbour and the good of others, particularly England. Immediately, according to her wonted and holy sincere way, with her usual simplicity, she made it known to her Superior and confessor both, though she was assured neither would be pleased with it, and that both would oppose themselves to it, especially her Superior." Mary tells only a part of what resulted upon her making this disclosure.

The next day, the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, I sought to speak to the above-named Father Roger Lee, upon whose counsel I then depended, and begged him to receive what I had to tell him under the seal of confession, but he would not be content to do so. I argued, and would by all means tell it thus, saying that the things were of that nature that he could not properly keep them from his Superiors if not thus heard, and that once known it would immediately follow that, where now I was loved and praised by all, in one half hour I should not have a single friend, nor would there be a person who would not condemn and despise me, and more—which I believe I also felt the

most—he himself would have his part in this suffering, as afterwards most minutely happened. But with all this he would not yield, so that I related to him what had passed in the manner he desired, which from prudence, and for my greater trial, he appeared to disapprove, and oppose with a certain severity unusual to him, exhorting me to a more than ever exact observance of the rules and regulations of the place where I was, which I did with very good will.

Nor did Mary fare better with the Abbess, who, when informed by her of what had happened, “told her it was a temptation and illusion of our common enemy;” it was no longer the time when “young maidens should have visions;” such persons are held in no esteem, and upon her obedience, she was to reject this thought or imagination, “and as oft,” continues Winefrid Wigmore, “as it came to her mind she should leave whatsoever she was about and go make a discipline, be it never so oft in the day;” another spirit will soon return. These commands Mary faithfully obeyed, and with great zeal, so that Father Dominic Bissel writes of her: “From her following the injunctions of the Superior so exactly, and tearing her body with hard stripes of the discipline, she became more like a dried-up corpse than a living being.” Her soul, too, was in equal suffering.

I loved what I possessed [she writes] most sensibly and before all things that I knew, so much so that when I was the most left to my own nature and human defects, I wept to remember that I was not to be in that Order. And so desirous was I of a quiet life, and so good for nothing, that I found myself already wearied out with the little labour taken in this foundation. At the same time I was in everything too human, and sometimes even fearful of being deceived,

and of believing that to be good which was not so. All which were motives to cause me to remain there with all content for further trial, and so six or seven months more passed.

All these painful doubts made her test her own spirit also, by voluntary penances, besides following the directions of the Abbess, "which," says Winefrid, "she faithfully observed, from the first command to her going out, as also she did every particular rule most exactly to the very letter, in manner as if always to remain there, and as if no other way for Heaven than that."

But the Divine light was far stronger than all Mary's troubles and doubts, and would not be extinguished. It even gained additional power when she remembered that during the time which had elapsed since her taking the habit, "as herself oft recounted to us, she had certain glimpses and hoverings in her mind, little sparks of light, certain I know not what interior remonstrances, that God would somewhat else with her, which ever gave her trouble, and she was easy to persuade herself that it was a temptation, and to prevent what might follow from them, would have made sure by her profession. Which motion (her desire of seeing herself in an assured possession of the repose she so greatly wished for), caused her, contrary to her humility and reliance on the Divine Providence, to ask the Abbess to be professed some months after her clothing," that is, shortly before the time of which we are now writing. Almighty God so overruled it, however, that Mother Mary Stephana refused her request.

CHAPTER VII.

The Voice of Power.

1609.

MONTHS now passed on without any alleviation to Mary's interior and exterior trials, which, as Winefrid Wigmore tells us, "lasted near a year, in which time how great were her sufferances, having all to oppose her, among so many contradictions and oppositions on the part of her Superior and confessor, who, though he could not disapprove what she did, would at least not approve it. It is to be imagined he did thus to comply with his Superior his opinion." At length it was whispered not only within the community, but also outside among her friends in the the city, that Mary was purposing to leave the convent, and this became the means of inflicting upon her the severest part of the ordeal she was passing through. No one being able to discern her motives for such a step, the rumour exposed her to universal contempt. "In fine, all the world was against her, and the glorious *Hosanna* for her admirable and speedy ending the above-said work was turned to *Crucifige*. Some said she was left of God, and would die in the streets abandoned of all; others that pride and vanity had made her mad. Thus each one spoke according to her fancy."

But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men," and Almighty God completed His work in spite of evil tongues, and so strengthened Mary interiorly, that the poisoned arrows fell harmless. "What was all this to that strong and magnanimous soul? No other than as if it had not been, remaining amidst it all in firm equanimity. As their glorious acclamations had not put her up, neither did their despisings, clamorous reproaches and contempt, put her down, referring to God in the one, and relying on God in the other, with unspeakable grace within and heavenly serenity without, which was spread over her countenance and her whole exterior, so as her Superior was in admiration, especially when her ghostly father, on whom she relied, had wholly left her, she saw her (Mary) still the same, she would put her hand on her head and ask her how she did, adding, 'Is this the manner of your friends (naming the Order), to leave their penitents in temptation and greatest need?' To all which this blessed servant of God would answer with a cheerful countenance, 'I am very well.'"

Father Lee, as we have seen, would give Mary neither his approval nor his disapproval, and seems to have left her entirely to herself to form her decision. She relates his final words to her before her departure, which must have fallen coldly on her ear at such a juncture: "You may be saved, whether you go or whether you stay," "which was all the encouragement," she tells the Papal Nuncio Albergati, "or assistance any alive gave me at that time." Mary seems to have made some further arrangement

concerning her property before leaving, so that the community should not suffer as to temporalities by losing her, and this to so great an extent, that it has been said of her that "the foundation of this House of Poor Clares changed her from a rich English lady into a poor exiled woman, as she expended most of her property upon it." Thus faithfully did Mary complete the work she had set in hand. What her own feelings were meanwhile, she expresses in the letter to the Papal Nuncio just quoted. "To leave what I loved so much, and enjoyed with such sensible contentment, to expose myself to new labours, which then I saw to be very many, to incur the several censures of men and the great oppositions which on all sides would happen (appearing at that time, as I afterwards found them), afflicted me exceedingly; yet had I no power to will or wish any other than to expose myself to all these inconveniences, and put myself into God's hands with these uncertainties."

The time drew near [Mary continues in her Italian life] when all those not yet formally clothed were again to put on their secular dress, and to appear in their own rank and condition at the new monastery in the city of Gravellines, and there solemnly to receive the habit, among whom I was to be one. But in those seven months I saw more and more that God did not desire this, though I remained entirely ignorant of that which His Divine Majesty willed from me; and, seeing that I had to return to live in the world, to prevent the deceits of the devil, and to dispose my soul entirely for the Divine service, on Palm Sunday (1609) I made a vow of chastity, with the leave and approval of the before-mentioned Father, and then took leave of these dear friends with much feeling on both sides. To the end

that this new foundation might not suffer on account of my departure, the conceit of the people being more placed in me than was fitting, the report was spread, and with my consent, that my constitution was too weak to support such austerity, which nevertheless was not in the least the motive of my leaving. There was, however, some appearance of its being so to the public, and to those who did not know the contrary.

There was another reason circulated, and ignorantly believed by some to be the moving cause of Mary Ward's departure from the community, which is to be found in Bishop Blaise's letter already quoted. Writing of the new Gravelines community, he says :

Their Mother or Abbess, because she had hitherto been so accustomed, preferred being subject to the Order rather than to the Ordinary. As she earnestly pressed this petition, the Father Rector (Schondonch) obtained its fulfilment from the Most Rev. Father Commissary General of the Minorite Order in Belgium. The aforesaid Mrs. Mary Ward, on hearing that henceforth they were to forego the aid and direction of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who had hitherto been her spiritual advisers, did not join this community.

Mary's second painful combat and no less painful victory were now over. She had heroically overcome herself in steadfastly enduring the sternness of her confessor, the severity of the Superior, and the contempt of all who knew her, in obedience to what she afterwards fully proved to have been the impulses of Divine grace, and which she felt at the time powerless to resist. But even had she failed in her subsequent vocation, the work which she had accom-

plished in the foundation of the Gravelines Monastery was one amply sufficient for the devotion of a whole lifetime. Great has been the glory which it has given to God, in the exalted purity and exactness with which the holy Rule of St. Clare was observed within its walls, as well as in the number and saintliness of the souls who dedicated themselves to Him both there and among its many filiations. To her also both England and Ireland¹ are to this day indebted for the prayers, austerities, and labours offered up on their behalf by the inmates of the convents of St. Clare in both countries.

But a fraction only of the exterior results of Mary Ward's first work, emanating from the sudden impulse put into her heart by God on St. Gregory's Day, can be known on earth. Its fruits for eternity lie hidden with God. The Poor Clares of Gravelines are now in their native country, perhaps in answer to her prayers, and a memorial of both the impulse and the day appears to remain, though probably unconsciously to the holy souls who make it, in the rosary said annually on that feast for the conversion of England by the Poor Clares at Darlington, their representatives.

Mary's companions, with the community, left the temporary habitation at St. Omer and took possession of their new building at Gravelines, which was called the Convent of Nazareth, some time after Eastertide, 1609. Bishop Blaise received the Nuncio's mandate finally to separate the five professed nuns from their original convent, and to transfer them to Gravelines, in

¹ See Note III.

the July of that year. The rest were clothed there² by the Fathers of their Order. Mother Mary Stephana, the first Abbess, only lived to fill that office for six years, dying at the age of thirty-six, in November, 1613. *Non tam imperio præfuit, quam exemplo profuit*,³ was the character given of her during the years of her Superiority. If apparently wanting at times in tenderness towards others, she was doubtless doubly severe to herself. The life which she had so successfully introduced, with the ancient rule, into the new foundation, did not languish under her successors, and we find its members thus commended in the Douay Diary by Dr. Kellison, in a report to the Nuncio in 1622: *Florent magna sanctitatis et rigoris laude, et magnæ admirationi sunt spectantibus.* The monastery is also described in an unpublished letter of Father John Gerard's, which is among the Nymphenburg archives, and which will be further quoted in regard to its main purport at a later date. Writing in 1629 concerning the state of religious communities in general, he says: "What do you think of our English Poor Clares at Gravelines, for so many years not only an example of sanctity to all other convents of our nation, but almost to the entire world, because there was nothing to be compared to them in the Catholic Church?" Some portion of the spirit and pre-eminent grace of their first foundress, Mary Ward, seems to have rested upon the community after her departure, and to have remained as a permanent inheritance. One who knew it well,

² St. Omer's College, Annual Letter for 1609.

³ Dr. Oliver's *Collections for Devon and Cornwall*, p. 132.

writing in 1690, says: "The monastery of Graveling was always looked upon as a nursery of eminent sanctity; but humility seems to be their darling virtue."⁴

We learn through her own writings the respect and reverence shown by the Gravelines nuns towards Mary Ward as their foundress during her lifetime. She says in one of her conferences: "When I came to Gravelines, the Mother behaved thus; she asked for my blessing, and I asked the same from her, and neither would rise first; and she said to me that I had founded it all, and that therefore I must come to them as their Mother. At my departure she begged that they and those in our house should always be in union with each other."

It may not be uninteresting to our readers to add, that the Poor Clares at St. Omer, where Mary passed her painful novitiate as a lay-sister, moved to better quarters in 1619, while she was still living in the town, the Arquebusiers' House and Garden being given them by the magistrates, and that, when the Revolution broke out in France, the community there numbered forty-two nuns. We return to our history.

When Mary was out of that house and in her secular habit (which was exactly modest, genteel, and becoming), she took herself lodgings in the same town of St. Omer, often visiting those she had left, loving them as ever, most entirely dearly.

She was, therefore, much against her own natural inclinations, free again exteriorly, but in reality forced

⁴ *Life of Lady Warner.* By F. E. Scarisbrick, S.J. Edition 1858, p. 106.

to return to the world, and, as if from choice, to live as though belonging to it. Nor was that world slow in letting her know that to human eyes she had failed in attempting a life so far removed above its own, nor in showing her how greatly she had fallen in popular estimation in consequence. The epithets of "runaway nun," "the visionary," "the false prophetess," were freely bestowed upon her when she was seen again in the streets of St. Omer, clad in an ordinary dress of the fashion of the day. But such expressions did not disturb her peace.

She found [says the manuscript of her friend] a special and fatherly assistance from God, so as not to be the least discouraged. Whatever seemed great in this world, whether in point of honour, fame, riches, or pleasure, was mean and of no value with her; as they did not please, so neither did their opposites displease: her tempered calm freed her from their ebbs and flows. This appeared admirably when she left the English Poor Clares, by which she seemed at once to be deprived of all most pleasing and satisfying in this world and greatly promising for the next, and yet done without repine or murmur towards God, loss of courage, or confusion before men: ever serene, peaceful, and judiciously present to herself in all occasions.

Yet in spite of this exterior and even interior serenity, Mary had now entered upon a time of great suffering. She had foreseen in a measure, as we have heard, that this must come; but its length and the thousand details which were to add to its heavy pressure were concealed from her. Twenty years after, when she had occasion to recall this crisis of her life to herself and to others, she said publicly that all

the manifold dangers, labours, and sufferings which she had hitherto gone through, were to be reckoned as nothing, and in no way to be compared with the mental distress of these years. Continuing her autobiography, she describes the period preceding and immediately following her return to the world thus :

The displeasure and condemnation of many, and the opprobriums of those who shortly before had expended themselves in their praises of poor me—all these were trifles, not to be felt in comparison with the interior sufferings caused by the uncertainty of my vocation and of that which God willed with me. Those holy religious went to Gravelines to their monastery, and I remained for some weeks at St. Omer, still held in suspense as to what the Divine Will for me could be. The pain was great, but very endurable, because He Who laid on the burden also carried it. Notwithstanding I could believe that there is no suffering greater than the uncertainty as to the Divine Will, to one who is resolved to seek above everything to serve God, but yet I would not have attained the knowledge of it at a less price, nor can I be surprised at the imperfections of those who acquire it cheaply. But the offences and ingritudes of those who arrive at it with greater difficulty are exceedingly great, and what are they in the sight of God ?

Part of the distress which Mary speaks of was no doubt the mystery which hung over God's dealings with her soul during the two years just passed. If she ever endeavoured to read their meaning, it must have been in vain. The year's novitiate as a lay-sister which God's providential ordering had given her, ran entirely counter to the strong interior drawings, coming from Him as she believed them, which had

filled her with Divine love and taught her great lessons in the spiritual life for eleven years. And now, in the short space of one half hour, Almighty God had utterly destroyed the imaginary fabric which she had thought was to have been built up in her soul to His honour by means of the austerities of an enclosed life in religion. She was permitted to read the Divine meaning better at a future time, when she had become an adept in what God would teach her, and could say with still greater confidence and perfection those well-known words, "Put me where Thou wilt ; I am in Thy hand ; turn me hither and thither as Thou choosest ; I am Thy servant, ready for all things." Winefrid Wigmore, writing of her life as a Poor Clare, says :

But God, having ordained her for another end, would that this should be but as the means to prepare her, and for other secret judgments known to Himself, and perhaps (as herself was wont to say) to take away a temptation. Had she not proved this austere kind of life, she might have conceived, as all commonly do, she jealous of the best, that perfection is measured by the practice of austerities, and consequently not have had that entire satisfaction in her own blessed state.

But at the moment we are now considering, the past was to Mary a sea of perplexities, and the future lay before her as a dark void, without a sign from on high how to steer her course, or how to discover what the will of God was, to accomplish which she was in truth ready to part even with life itself. It is true that "she found a special and Fatherly assistance from God." But this consisted mainly in the firm

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conviction which remained within her, that it was His voice and His command that she was obeying.

Yet wanted she not sensibilities and apprehensions, doubtless to her increase of merit, of the loneliness and dangers of her now to be taken in hand encounters, her so long loved and looked for solitude, scarce possessed but snatched from her, and she in the midst of uncertainties, in this state full of doubts and inquietudes, spoiled, as it were, of all contents and assurances, but her love to the will of God and dependence of His Fatherly Providence.

Many opinions were passed outside the convent as to what Mary's future vocation should be, and plenty of advice doubtless was proffered, as much beside the mark as such advice generally is. We hear a little of what passed through Bishop Blaise's letter. "Being in doubt as to what kind of life she should embrace, she was counselled by the English Fathers to enter with her companions the well known convent of Benedictine Nuns at Brussels, where she would enjoy every spiritual advantage, for at that time the convent of St. Monica at Louvain had not been opened. But as she declared that her views were directed to quite another kind of life, the Rev. Father Rector suggested to her the Teresians or Carmelites, and lent her the *Life and Rule of the Blessed Mother Teresa*, which he had brought with him to Louvain, and extolled to her on many occasions the perfection of this Order."

This last advice was followed up still further by Father Roger Lee. Having refused to pass any judgment upon her course, he had left her to herself while she was still with the Poor Clares. But in spite of this, after leaving the convent, we hear

that "she still kept her former confessor, (a man himself truly holy and deserving)." Before long, Mary tells us, with Father Lee's consent, she made a vow to become a religious, though she adds, "but not of any Order in particular, not being able then to incline to one more than another, and finding in none of them anything which was to my taste." The beauty even of St. Teresa's life made no impression upon her, and it was only, she writes, "to obey my confessor, without any inclination on my part, I afterwards made another vow to enter the Teresian Order, if so he should command me." Elsewhere Mary says, "This they committed me unto, and though I found no particular vocation to that Order, yet hoping God would not leave me, nor forbear to dispose me to His best will, for leaving myself for Him, I did as they advised me, which caused me great trouble afterward many ways, though all turned to my best in the end."

Meanwhile, through these strange contrarieties and vexations, hard and distasteful to flesh and blood, Almighty God, in His own hidden manner, was secretly directing Mary's steps, and preparing His way to unfold those gracious designs which He purposed to fulfil in her. Hidden indeed was His method of dealing with her. In no part of His Providence is He more wonderful than in His choice of the paths by which He leads His servants to the work which He requires of them. He had now used Mary Ward for the purpose of opening to many chosen souls among her countrywomen that beautiful garden of austere virtue which owed its forma-

tion, under Him, to St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. As soon as this work was done, He placed her, fortified by all she had gone through, outside the Paradise which He had used her hand to plant. We shall see what were His next designs for this noble soul. But few, certainly, could have imagined that the enclosed and silent life of a Poor Clare was the preparation appointed by Him for her entrance upon scenes such as the following chapters will bring before us.

NOTES TO BOOK II.

Note I.—*Convent of English Benedictines at Brussels.*
(page 155.)

A contemporary letter, probably of a spy, informs us that "the Archduke gave £2,000 with which they bought a house," and that when "Lady Mary Percy, Mrs. Dorothy Arundel, and six other English ladies took the habit, the ceremony was very solemn, the Infanta, who was their godmother, Archduke, and all the Court and the Pope's Nuncio being present. The eight were most bravely apparelled (borrowed ware), and adorned with rich jewels like brides. The Infanta brought them into the church leading the Lady Mary and Mrs. Dorothy, and one of her great ladies led each of the others. The Infanta embraced them all, and assured them she would be a mother to them. The Archduke promised them all assistance. The Infanta made a banquet for one hundred persons, the great ladies, Abbess and nuns dining at one of the tables. It was one of the solemnest things that was seen this hundred years; many ladies and others could not forbear weeping" (from letter of J. B. *alias* John Petit, to Peter Halins, November $\frac{13}{3}$ 1599, *Flanders Correspondence*, Calendar of State Papers, vol. 1598—1601, p. 343.

Note II.—*Munificence and kindness of the Archdukes towards religious foundations.* (page 157.)

"What these sovereigns spent in founding, endowing, and enriching churches, and convents in Brussels alone, is incalculable," says Potvin, in his *Albert et Isabelle*. Among the latter, they founded and endowed one for twenty-one Carmelites in the capital, "en l'honneur de Madame Ste. Anne et Monsieur St. Joseph," and innumerable petitions for aid poured into them from every part of the Netherlands, which seem seldom to have been rejected. Sometimes it was to roof a church or rebuild a

tower ; sometimes for refugee (some of them perhaps English) priests, or for the expenses of a chapter ; sometimes for journeys or the dowries of religious, and even for such smaller matters, as to build a wall for the convenience of a recluse, for altar wines and music books, painted glass and pictures for churches, and, in 1602, two hundred florins "pour des harengs salés à distribuer à divers cloistres et couvents pour leur soulagement durant le carême."

Note III.—*The English and Irish Poor Clares, filiations from Gravelines.* (page 188.)

In a manuscript list, supposed to be that of a Government spy of about the year 1624, which contains the numbers of English subjects in various religious houses in the Netherlands, those in "a monastery of English nuns of the Order of St. Clare," at "Gravelines," are stated to be "sixty-five." The first filiation in point of time was that sent to Ireland. In the year 1625 six nuns left the Gravelines convent for that country. For a short previous period there had been a lull in the violence of the persecution against the Catholics ; foreign princes had expostulated with James the First, and, above all, he had himself set his heart on bringing about a marriage between the Infanta and Prince Charles, and one of the conditions involved the toleration of Catholics. Their hopes were therefore raised, and though "the Spanish match" failed, the subsequent alliance of Charles the First with another Catholic Princess, Henrietta Maria of France, still left them sanguine as to the future. The names of the six courageous religious who arrived in Dublin must not be omitted. Two of them were daughters of Viscount Dillon, in religion, Sisters Mary Joseph and Cicely Francis. Sister Mary Magdalene Nugent was probably one of the family of that name who had so generously rescued the fine Franciscan church and monastery of Multifarnham, Meath, by purchasing and re-purchasing it for the monks from those to whom they were sold in Henry the Eighth's and Elizabeth's reign. They remained unhurt until the year 1601, when Lord Mountjoy sent soldiers and set fire to them both. The fourth was Sister Martha Marianna, whose name for prudential, perhaps political, reasons was concealed. The two remaining nuns, Sisters Mary Power and Mary

Eustace, were from Dublin, where it had been hoped that the first settlement would have been made, and where six novices at once joined them. But after many difficulties, the whole party were obliged to leave the city by twos and threes, and after a perilous journey they made their way to Athlone, where they were in less danger of observation. Here, in a retired situation, Sir Luke Dillon built them a convent, which they named Bethlehem, and the ancient rule of St. Clare which they learned at Gravelines was established in it with the greatest exactness. In a few years their number amounted to sixty, and they also, in spite of the virulent persecution around them and all its attendant evils, sent out filiations to Drogheda and Galway, who took with them the same traditionary rule and customs.

They could not, however, live together more than temporarily, in communities. Finally, in 1652, when Cromwell's soldiers were performing their cruel work in Ireland, the greater number were obliged to leave the country, when they entered the convents of the Order where the primitive rule was observed in Spain. Those who remained were scattered in different parts, endeavouring still to carry on and propagate their severe way of life, even under what appear to us now like insurmountable difficulties. They were often forced to change their places of concealment. In 1712 they again attempted a settlement in Dublin, and it is from these religious and their successors that the several Houses of Poor Clares now in Ireland are descended. It is remarkable that in the beginning of the present century, a fourth vow, that of devoting themselves to the education of poor children, was added by Pope Pius the Seventh to their three ordinary vows of religion. This vow was entirely in accordance, as we have seen, with the first original thought of their Gravelines foundress, Mary Ward, whose largeness of mind and heart had already in some measure foreseen the great work which was just beginning to open upon the Catholic Church, one of such vital import to her and to the generations of centuries to come—the religious training of the young. The development of this thought commenced even at Gravelines itself, where there was a school for young girls, and at Dunkirk it was part of the original conditions of the foundation, that children should be instructed.

We must next turn to the foreign filiations from Gravelines,

which were three in number. The first was that of Aire, in 1629, made at the instigation of Father Francis Davenport, President of the Franciscan College, which had been founded at Douay by Father John Gennings. The mother-house was sufficiently rich in subjects to send out on this occasion a ready formed community, twenty-three in all, among whom were three who had been Mary Ward's companions in the Novitiate at St. Omer, with Sister Margaret of St. Paul (Margaret Radcliffe), who was professed in 1612, as their Abbess. This foundation was placed under the jurisdiction of the Order. The vacant places at Gravelines were soon refilled, and in the course of some years the house was again overflowing to such an extent as to cause a dearth in the means of supporting the inmates. A second colony of nuns was therefore sent out from Gravelines in the year 1644, having obtained permission from Louis the Fourteenth, through Queen Henrietta Maria, to establish themselves at Rouen, a city where, in the previous century, many distressed English Catholics had found shelter. English families and English priests were well known there, and after a fair amount of the difficulties usual to a new foundation, the English Poor Clares of Gravelines succeeded in settling themselves and building a convent, which they entered in 1652. Fourteen nuns, among whom were Margaret (in religion Ignatia) Bedingfield, Winefrid Giffard, M. Magdalene Browne, sister of the Abbess at Dunkirk, all of them afterwards Abbesses at Rouen, were sent with one hundred pistoles only for their expenses and future maintenance, on what was then considered a long and dangerous journey across France, with Mother Mary Francis Taylor as their Abbess.

A letter from the latter to the Abbess of Gravelines, Louisa Clare Taylor, still exists, relating how they started in the "coach" provided by the governor's wife, and from Calais proceeded in waggons, "one with six horses and four waggoners." It tells of the warm receptions and feastings they received in the various convents on the way; how one of the waggons was upset in the mud, and another stuck fast in a trench one day, and all three were upset the next; how the nuns stopped and washed their linen in an orchard, and how finally on arriving at Rouen, though the chaplain from Gravelines had preceded them, no dwelling had been got for them, rents being too high,

and when at length one was obtained, the windows were broken and the doors would not shut. Meanwhile they had to house themselves in an inn for a considerable period, and it was perhaps this circumstance that made them eventually name their convent "The Exile of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph." But though in the inn they must have had a rather precarious subsistence from alms, yet Rouen finally proved anything but an ungenial "land of Egypt" to them, as they flourished there and found many benefactors, among whom was Sir Richard Forster, who gave them £1000, with which they bought ground for their building. Numerous holy and gifted souls entered among them also, noted for their "humility, disengagement from the world, spirit of penance, holy zeal, and fervent love of God," and they remained in the undisturbed exercise of their austere life for one hundred and forty years, at the end of which period they were still forty-two in number. The convent which the Poor Clares built at Rouen, through the generosity of an English lady who compassionated their confined quarters in the Rue du Grand Maulevrier, still remains, and is occupied now by Visitandines. In the chapel are ancient monumental slabs to four of the first Abbesses, including Mother Mary F. Taylor, the foundress.

The third filiation, that of Dunkirk, appears to have originated equally from the large numbers and the poverty of the mother-house, Sister Anne Browne having been sent there to collect alms for the necessities of the Gravelines Convent. This lady was one of two nieces of Lord Montague, who had both of them been educated at St. Omer and had been many years professed. She was accompanied by Sisters Clare Francis and Mary Colette Rookwood, Clare Colette Blundell, Anne Clare Anderton, and three other nuns. The inhabitants of Dunkirk gave them so warm a welcome and so urged them to remain and teach their children, that a permanent settlement was made there by the help of the Spanish Governor and others, and the nuns opened a ladies' school in 1652, which gave them a sufficient maintenance. The community afterwards became large and flourishing. Mother Anne Browne filled the office of Abbess until her death in 1665 : she was remarkable for her great humility and invincible patience under many trials and sicknesses. It was during her rule, when the English and

French took the town in 1651, that the nuns received kindness from the Puritan Governor, Lord Lockhart, and his wife, who finding them discalced and without fire in the house, during a cold winter, sent them coals and wood. They subsequently, however, suffered from the rudeness of Cromwell's Puritan soldiers, who, it is related, among other insults, lighted their pipes at the altar while Mass was being said. The nuns removed for a year to Ghent, but returned at the suit of the magistrate and people. When Dunkirk had passed into the hands of the French, the Queen-Regent, Anne of Austria, took the nuns under her protection. Mother Clare Colette Blundell was the second Superior of the House, and the two Rookwoods, mentioned above, succeeded her. They were granddaughters of Ambrose Rookwood, one of the chief actors in the Gunpowder Plot, some of whose family were much connected with the future history of Mary Ward. Alban Butler, the well-known and holy author of the *Lives of the Saints*, visited the convent during his tours in Flanders in 1745, and says in his account of the foundation (*Travels through France and Italy*), "the present Mrs. Langdale is the seventh Superior."

To return to the mother-house at Gravelines. In spite of its poverty and its filiations, the number of inmates remained undiminished during the seventeenth century. There were sixty professed nuns there in 1654, at the time when the grate of inclosure was torn down by the explosion of the powder magazine. In 1682, an old manuscript written by a nun of Gravelines states, that while Father William Warren was confessor eighty-two religious had been clothed, of whom fifty-eight were alive when he died. Among those to whose holy lives and deaths this Father gave a written testimony were Lady Warner, already mentioned, and her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Warner, Sister Mary Clare, who had entered the convent with her. The former, Sister Clare of Jesus, died in the odour of sanctity, and it is stated that when her body lay exposed for three days in the choir in 1670, that a painter might take her likeness, "the choir and church were filled with such a perfume as all wondered at." In digging her grave next to that of Mother Louisa Taylor, her former Abbess, the grave of the latter was broken into, when a scent no less fragrant issued from it, "so that," Father Scarisbrick writes, "their sweet odours were thus united after

death, as their affections had been whilst they lived." This Abbess was succeeded by Mother Anne Bonaventure Bedingfield, one of the remarkable family of Francis Bedingfield of Redlingfield, whose eleven daughters were nuns, of whom Margaret (Mother Ignatia), second Abbess of Rouen, was the second, and Anne Bedingfield, who was professed at Gravelines in 1640, was the tenth. Two other of these holy sisters we shall find were intimately united in friendship with Mary Ward during the latter part of her life.

During the lukewarm days of the eighteenth century, when open persecution had ceased, and through the deadening influence of Protestant society, and the charms of a peaceful life, the faith of Catholics had grown less fervid, the numbers of those who embraced the austere life of a Poor Clare visibly decreased in the English convents abroad. At Gravelines they dwindled to one half those of the preceding century. In 1745, Alban Butler describes the convent as having a large inclosure and a very handsome choir in their church, but adds, that it was "in low circumstances, containing about forty nuns, several of birth and good fortune." At the time of the French Revolution, when the Poor Clares of Dunkirk, together with the Benedictines (of the filiation from Ghent founded in 1662), were sent to Gravelines as prisoners, when the mother-house was turned into a gaol, and their church taken from them and desecrated, the whole number of the three communities only amounted to seventy-seven. Of these, thirty-four, including lay-sisters, belonged to Gravelines. The nuns of Aire and Rouen were similarly imprisoned in their convents. The treatment of the religious during the horrors of the Reign of Terror by the Revolutionists has become a part of the history of those times in France. The English Poor Clares of Gravelines and their filiations had their full share of suffering, though they escaped the guillotine. At the death of Robespierre they were released, but being all ordered to leave the country, they took refuge in England, where, after living as separate communities for a time, the remaining members were finally united in that of Clare Abbey, Darlington, which now represents the Gravelines foundation and those of its three daughter-houses.

The Gravelines register, which was brought with them to England by the Poor Clares, gives the names of two hundred

and seventy-nine nuns professed there since 1609. That of Dunkirk, still existing, at Ushaw, with obituary records of each, has eighty-four names in addition to the eight nuns who first went there. The communities of Aire and Rouen were fully as numerous. In these ancient registers are to be found the names of most of the principal Catholic families of the two last centuries, who in some instances, from generation to generation, could boast of having a Poor Clare among their daughters. Thus there are as many as fourteen of the Clifton family, five Radclyffes, seven Rookwoods, seven Blundells, and several Howards, Petres, Langdales, Gerards, Andertons, Giffards, Cannells, Shaftoes, and we also find the names of Talbot, Jerningham, Arundell of Wardour, Tempest, Smythe, Throckmorton, Vavasour, Silvertop, which occur among numerous others. The well-known fact of the longevity found in the members of ascetic orders, is well exemplified in the history of these houses of the Poor Clares. There are frequent notices of jubilarians in the registers, and some long survived even that age, as, for instance, the third and fifth Abbesses of Rouen, who attained the ages of ninety and ninety-one respectively; the latter, Mother Francisca Clifton, having lived seventy-five years in religion.

THE LIFE OF MARY WARD.

BOOK THE THIRD.

BEGINNING OF A NEW INSTITUTE.

CHAPTER I.

Some Scenes in London.

1609.

NONE of Mary Ward's early biographies throw light on the circumstances which led to her sudden determination to return to England. Her own words also merely tell, in her own simple way, the fact and with what intention she went, and reveal no more. In her *Italian Life*, after mentioning the two vows she took with the consent of Father Roger Lee, she adds, "and afterwards, for good reasons, and by his permission, I returned to England with the intention of employing myself there for some months, in seeking to be of use to others." In the letter to the Nuncio Albergati already quoted, she says: "I made a third vow, to spend some months in England to do all the little I could for God, and the good of those there, not to be idle in the meantime, and the better prepared for whatsoever God should call me to." Beyond these words, therefore, we are left to find some clue for ourselves, as to what had inwardly drawn her to take this step.

Mary had lately learned from Almighty God, that she did not even yet know how her life was to be spent for Him. It would appear that until this time

she had always taken it for granted that God's will for her was the severest form of inclosed life possible to a nun, and that this was the life of perfection and entire devotion to Him to which He was continually urging her. Yet a secret attraction which she had never yet analysed, nor recognized as God's voice, had drawn her ever since her first call to religion to work for the souls of others. At the beginning of her letter to the Nuncio, she describes her state of mind at the age of fifteen, which had since remained essentially the same, though her love of souls had developed itself much more strongly while still a lay-sister among the Poor Clares.

It seemed to me most perfection to take the most austere order, that so a soul might give herself to God, not in part, but altogether. Since I saw not how a religious woman could do good to more than herself alone. To teach children then seemed too much distraction, might be done by others, nor was of that perfection and importance, as therefore to hinder that quiet and continual communication with God, which strict inclosure afforded. Which inclosure and the perfect observance of poverty were the two especial points I aimed at in whatsoever order I should undertake, being (as I said) I could do no good to others. Which if it could have been, I valued above all, though I found a far more sensible content in solitude and abstraction from the world, and therefore never so much as thought of that other (in way of practice) till God (as I trust) called me unto it, in manner against my will.

It was this latent love for souls which was now drawing Mary back into the world. In the last manifestation of God's will to her which had cost her so

dearly, no less than the loss of the cloistered life she so greatly loved, there had been one word given to her through which the rest, still left in obscurity, were to be unfolded, even, as she says, as it were, "against her will." That word was "England," one already deeply engraven in her soul through all the prayers and sighs which she had poured forth to God, for we have seen how in all her previous undertakings, England and the English people were ever uppermost in her thoughts. Now, Almighty God had shown to her that her future state of life was to be one "very much to God's honour, and the good of others, particularly England." No wonder, then, that that word was enough, and that the resolve was at once made to go to England. No wonder that she should go in confident hope, that there God's further will would be manifested to her.

This resolution seems to have been entirely Mary's own. There is no reason to suppose that Father Roger Lee acted in the matter beyond giving his consent and encouragement to her proposal. Doubtless from his own early experience in similar doings before he was yet a religious, he must well have known the ample opportunities for helping souls which a fervent Catholic could find in the existing state of society in England, attended though it might be by imminent risk and danger. Mary, in the words which have been quoted above, does not mention that she had taken a vow of obedience to this Father, beyond that of entering some religious order. She only says that she had made a vow to go to England. The former vow is known, however, by what she

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writes on many future occasions. The latter may have been sought by her to give her strength for what nature shrank from, in "the loneliness and dangers of her now to be taken in hand encounters," which, as we know, weighed heavily upon her soul at times. Such a cloud was not suffered either to hinder Mary or to rest long upon her, nor could she remain idle: "Knowing no further what part she was to act, together with the mistrust of herself, she made a vow of obedience to her ghostly father, and to labour in England in the good of her neighbour, which latter, guided by the former, she with great speed and inexpressible fervour put in execution, and therein passed a good space."

The Painted Life comes again to our aid in a very valuable manner at this juncture. The last of the series which has been mentioned, portrays Mary's happy departure from England in 1606 to enter a convent at St. Omer. The veil is then drawn over the next three years of her life. There is no attempt to delineate the sorrows and joys at St. Omer, or her successful residence at the Court of Brussels and its remarkable results, both to herself and to others respecting the new foundation.

The next and sixteenth painting of this series contains the following sentence: "Mary, in the year 1609, in the twenty-fourth year of her age, with the approval of her confessor whom she had vowed to obey in all things concerning her soul, made a vow to return to England to seek, conformably to her condition in life, for the salvation of souls: which she did, and with much fruit." She left St. Omer some

few weeks after Easter, and had settled a fixed period with Father Roger Lee during which she was to remain in England. The movements of Catholics, especially if engaged in endeavouring to convert others, had to be very quietly and secretly set in hand, and very scanty information is to be found as to where Mary resided during these months. She appears to have been mostly with relations and intimate friends, and various indications show that this was not always in the same part of England, but that she was probably in Yorkshire and Gloucestershire, and also in Suffolk.

Her love and duty to her parents would naturally, in returning to her native country, take her first to visit them, and Mary could do this with a free heart and easy conscience, for she could well say that God had sent her back whence she came. It is much to be lamented that neither Mary Ward's biographers nor her own writings afford us more than a few words as to her father and mother, and most of the different members of her family, with one exception only. She herself writes of them in relating the history of her childhood and call to religion, but once having given up all that was dear to her for the love of God, her pen is occupied alone with what referred to the great work God gave her to do. Her own history and that of all belonging to her are henceforth merged in what she esteemed as of far higher importance. So much is this the case that even the exact number of Mary Ward's brothers and sisters is not known with certainty.

At this time her family were probably in Yorkshire.

It requires no great stretch of imagination to conceive what Mary's return to Newby must have been. Her father, Marmaduke Ward, with his strong large-hearted love to his daughter, who yet had given her up for God so generously, and her pious mother, who as we shall find, could not finally resolve to live apart from her, stand prominently before us. The rest of the family party were, we may conclude, undiminished in number. For in the seventeenth century, when the independent spirit of the rising generation was restrained within far closer limits than at present, it was a customary practice for some at least of the married children to live in the roomy ancestral mansion with their parents, in patriarchal fashion, as one large household. We may, therefore, well picture Mary's eldest brother John, "the dearest to her of all," giving her the warm reception at Newby which his extreme sympathy with her would elicit. It seems likely that he had married early in life, for in the list of recusants at Ripon, made in 1604,¹ which has been quoted above, together with the wife of Marmaduke Ward, the name of "Janet, wife of John Ward," appears. Next to him would be Barbara, Mary's dearly loved sister, little more than a year younger than herself, who would doubly rejoice to see her again. Already drawn inwardly to the religious life, her eldest sister's return became as it were a message from God to her, by means of which her vocation was marked out for her, we shall hear later on with what results. With what burning interest must she have heard all that Mary had to tell! Of the younger

¹ Peacock's *Yorkshire Catholics*, p. 43.

members of the family, there is still a little group, three only of whom have facts connected with their history sufficient to cause them to be brought forward with anything like individuality in the picture. Of these Teresa and Elisabeth Ward are the first to attract us.

Elisabeth it is said² resembled Mary both in person and in the possession of great and striking talents. For Teresa, who at this time must have been still under twenty years of age, may it not have been that to her holy sister she owed, if not the first thoughts, yet the final decision, of devoting her life to God in the holy Order of the great saint whose name she bore? Mary was not drawn herself that way, but we shall find what power her words had with others, and what skill God had given her in leading souls onwards where He would have them to be. She was well acquainted with all that could outwardly be known of the Teresian Order, from the necessity she had been under of studying its spirit in consequence of her vow to Father Lee. Teresa proved a ready listener to all Mary could tell her, for it seems that within the next year or two she passed through St. Omer, and, after visiting her sister, proceeded to Mons, where she had the privilege of making her novitiate under the holy Anne of St. Bartholomew and the Spanish nuns, St. Teresa's companions, who had lately founded a convent in that city.

As the rest of Teresa Ward's history may be comprised in few words, and her choice of vocation separated her entirely from her sister's more troubled

² *Gottseliges Leben.* F. T. Lohner, p. 204.

and difficult path, it may be as well to relate in this place what is known of her. That she soon became conspicuous in the Order both for holiness and talent may be gathered without a doubt by the fact that after her profession, as Teresa of Jesus, at Mons, she was chosen as early as before the year 1615,³ to be one of the foundresses of a Teresian house in Poland, and was Subprioress there. Having completed this foundation and returned thence, in 1619, she was next sent with three other holy nuns of the Order to be companions to the well-known Mother Anne of the Ascension in the new settlement at Antwerp, where she was the first Subprioress, and in 1647 was made Prioress, the third, of that house. In 1648, she arranged the filiation sent out thence to Lierre,⁴ and accompanied the nuns there for a time to consolidate the new foundation. Mother Teresa of Jesus died the following year, 1649. Though no details are known of her interior life, yet it is sufficient to learn of her, that she was one of the early Prioresses of the Antwerp Carmelite Convent, of whom it has been said that "they were all so eminent for piety that a religious community might justly glory in any one of them." Neither is it little that, from about the age of twenty, she had also been one of the number of those religious who became noted in the Church for unusual holiness and perfection of life, possessing the

³ Bishop Blaise in his Pastoral letter states of those ladies who went through St. Omer to join other orders between 1610 and 1615, "Two went to the Teresians, one of whom a sister of Mrs. Ward, has been sent to Poland."

⁴ See *Life of Margard Mostyn* (Quarterly Series).

spirit of St. Teresa in all its original freshness, having derived it from the companions of the Saint.⁵

But to complete the family group we have been describing, besides Teresa and Elisabeth, who must anxiously have awaited Mary's arrival, there were, George Ward, her younger brother, then a youth of fifteen, and another sister, of whom little is known beyond the fact of her connection with Mary. A happy family meeting doubtless it was. We cannot, too, but suppose that many of their numerous more distant relations gathered together to welcome back one so loved, though neither her own feelings nor theirs are thought by her worthy of record. Surely amongst these the Babthorpes, the Inglebys, the Mallorys, the friends of Mary's youth, who had cherished so warm an affection towards her, would not be the last.

But Mary, true to her inspirations, did not linger amidst the joys of a family re-union, sweet as these must have been to one gifted with such a tender heart as hers. She had returned to England for far other objects, and but for a limited time. The happiness of an earthly home had been already given up to God for ever. Accordingly we find that her longest stay must have been in London. We have to remember that she was now living with the dress and manner of life of any other lady in her own rank. Her birth and position gave her access to the most distinguished society of the day to which Catholics

⁵ The above particulars have been obtained through the kindness of the Carmelite nuns at Lanherne, Cornwall, the representatives of the Antwerp house, from the ancient manuscripts there.

were admitted, and her beauty and attractiveness made her eagerly sought for there. From Winefrid Wigmore we learn that she was "in lodgings" in London, "in St. Clement's Churchyard, in the Strand," but she does not name with whom she was living. These lodgings were situated in what was the most fashionable part of London in the seventeenth century. Somerset House was the dower Palace of Queen Anne of Denmark, who resided there at times, and the Strand and the streets leading to the river were full of the houses of the nobility and those about the Court, who sought to be near the Thames, then the great highway or Mall of London, along which the rich and noble floated in their pleasure barges, and gay processions were formed on festive or State occasions, in which royalty itself took part. But what attraction could there be in such a neighbourhood to one who had so lately rejected untasted all the splendour and festivity of the Court of Brussels? There was another side to the picture which will answer this question.

The years succeeding the Gunpowder Plot were part of the bitterest period of Catholic persecution. No Catholic's house was then safe, as we have seen, from rude and violent search. Catholics as they passed along in London were liable to be tracked by spies, and in a moment hurried off to give an account of their religion. Crowded prisons full of sufferers for the faith were but a few steps distant, and torture and death itself were at hand and of easy attainment. These streets, therefore, the very focus of gay and fashionable society, were for that

reason least suspected, and consequently most free from the visits of the pursuivants and their crew. It was here, and even in Protestant houses, that we find priests and others domiciled, engaged in the difficult and hazardous work of ministering to the souls of their fellow-Catholics, and endeavouring to stem the tide of heresy by rescuing those who had fallen into the snare. Mary was not, therefore, alone or solitary in this to her uncongenial neighbourhood, or in the occupations which kept her there, but was one among many not far distant, engaged in the same work. But what could a young and beautiful lady effect with an array of difficulties before her, which made even men's hearts shrink and fail them in the day of trial?

Her early friend, who must well have known what she writes of, gives some information on this point, in a short general description of Mary's way of life and occupations during her present residence in England.

Still retaining her first extreme beauty, she went clothed as became her birth for matter and manner, and wore underneath a most sharp haircloth, which by continuance did eat into her flesh; nor did she omit her daily disciplines, oft fastings, and much very long watching. When it was for the good of her neighbour, what did she reserve to herself? Neither honour, life, nor liberty. When it best suited with present occasions, she put on servants' and mean women's clothes. No prison did she dread to visit, or danger to pass to which she feared to expose herself, so as in some passages it was hard to say which virtue exceeded, her most innate modesty (which sometimes she was wont smilingly to say gave her trouble, she was so apt to blush)

or courage had the upper hand, the one retiring her from all conversation, the other making her incapable of fears and apprehensions, or memory of her tenderness and beauty, or almost, one might say, her sex. As was visible in many occasions then and multitudes after, that God gave her an admirable power over wickedness in man or devil, and great protections in herself and by her to hers.

These few sentences open such a scene before us of love of souls, undaunted courage, firm faith, fearless forgetfulness, and, besides this, severe abnegation of self and confidence in and love of God, that the gentle timidity of character with which they were united but adds to their beauty. Can we wonder that marvellous results followed, or that the protection of God's good Providence should day by day shield Mary from harm while thus employed? But few details remain to us of a period so full of incident and interest as these six or seven months must have been, but what are told are evidently specimens only from a multitude such. They illustrate, however, in some measure, the words quoted above, and give us bright glimpses of Mary in her threefold life—in the world, at work for souls, and in secret with God.

Taking as our guide the order of events given in the *Painted Life*, we find Mary, very shortly after her arrival, perhaps on her way to London, at the house of a family in Suffolk which, if not related to her by blood, was connected by marriage, and much bound up with her own by intimate friendship. This friendship, and the strong religious feelings amongst them, had induced them to unite in the

unfortunate and mistaken projects terminating in the Gunpowder Plot and its tragical results. Ambrose Rookwood, the conspirator, and Sir William Babthorpe, Mary's cousin and early friend, had married sisters. They were of the Lincolnshire family of Tyrwhitts. Mrs. Ambrose Rookwood possessed the same fervent spirit as many of the brave Catholic ladies of that time. As her husband passed by the window where she was standing, on his way to execution, he called out to her to pray for him. "I will," was her answer, "and be of good courage and offer thyself wholly to God. I for my part do as freely restore thee to God as He gave thee unto me." This faithful and courageous soul was perhaps at Coldham Hall when Mary went there in 1609, and would have found in her a congenial spirit. The Rookwoods were an ancient county family, and had some interest with James I., as he, after a few years, knighted the conspirator's son. It does not appear that they suffered so greatly in fortune as most of the others concerned in the Plot; at any rate Coldham Hall seems to have been either left in their hands or restored to them after the execution of Ambrose.⁶

While Mary was staying at this place the follow-

⁶ This mansion with its mullioned windows and ancient chapel still exists in good preservation, and until about twelve years since remained in the possession of the descendants of the conspirator, the family of Rookwood Gage, now all but extinct. In 1869, the house and part of the property were sold to the Lomax family. Coldham Hall was built in 1574 by Robert Rookwood, the father of Ambrose; his initials with the date remain over the porch. A portrait of Sir Robert, Ambrose's son, mentioned in the text, is at the Hall.

ing incident occurred, which we will relate in her friend's words :

A rich yeoman man's wife, well known and extraordinary well qualified for birth, and no less maliciously grounded in her heresy, so far as to put all that visited her out of hope of her conversion, whereof divers were very virtuous and learned priests, one day our dear Mother hearing this went to visit her in her wonted mild, sweet manner, showed to her the feeling she had of her sickness, but more for her perverseness, putting her hand upon her head, said some few words to that effect, which made so strange and unexpected a change in her soul, as she cried out with great efficacy but serenity, "I will be a Roman Catholic, and confess now, now;" which she did with so great exactness and light, with so hearty sorrow and feeling and such manifest signs of a true repentance, as amazed the confessor.

The writer of the manuscript places this occurrence, among others, at one of Mary's later visits to England, but in the series of paintings it ranks as the first event recorded in 1609, the inscription on the seventeenth of them running thus : "Mary at Coldham Hall in England, by the touch of her hands and by friendly conversation so changed a very wealthy matron, who was quite hardened in heresy (and of which conversion learned and spiritual men, after many strenuous labours and exhortations, had despaired), that she called out, 'I will be a Catholic, confess my sins, and do all which belongs to a perfect conversion,' which, with great fervour, she afterwards accomplished." We shall hereafter find that this was not the only soul whom Mary won for Almighty God

while staying with the Rookwood family, and that she gained a still richer prize which brought great fruit to Him in after days.

In the next painting of the historical series, Mary is depicted as in London, making use of the knowledge which her relationship gave her of the state of various souls to become the instrument of good to them. Miss Gray is named as her aunt, though with more likelihood she should have been called her cousin. Through the Nevilles and Gascoignes the Wards were related to the families of Sir Ralph and Sir Thomas Gray. Mary must have been aware, perhaps by some words she may have let fall in ordinary conversation, that Miss Gray's mind was open to conviction as to the Catholic faith, but that her knowledge was imperfect; she saw probably that her understanding was at fault, not her heart. Relations are rarely the direct human agents in the conversion of others, especially if the one in error is the elder of the two. They are generally the last who have any power to speak on the all but forbidden subject. There is perhaps a chord in the heart of the wanderer which can be touched, but another hand must strike it; it may be the long, silent prayers of years which win the victory at last, yet strange lips finally bring home the long-veiled truth. But Mary had no one to whom she could intrust the delicate and difficult commission. Was this soul then to perish?

From the inscriptions on two of the ancient pictures we find what followed. The eighteenth has these words: "Mary, urged by ardent zeal and

longing for souls, in order to lead her aunt, Miss Gray, to the Catholic religion, when in London put on, instead of her own handsome lady's dress, the clothes of her waiting-maid, that she might thus be able unrecognized to speak freely with her aunt in a house appointed for the purpose." Almighty God prospered the venturesome attempt and the loving zeal which suggested it, for the next painting contains the following sentence: "Mary when in London, through her fervent prayers and conversation, persuaded her aunt, Miss Gray, to treat there with a priest of the Society of Jesus, concerning her reception of the true faith, and not without fruit." The priest here mentioned may have been Father Holtby, who was still Superior of the English Mission, in which office he continued until the year 1609, and who as such would live principally in London. We cannot doubt that Mary would be in communication with him. There is a manuscript letter existing of Father Holtby's⁷ signed under the *alias* North, which he frequently used, addressed to "Mr. Roger Lee." It is upon the affairs of the Society of Jesus, under the disguised names of "Journeymen," "Customer," &c. He says towards the end, as if in answer to a letter of Father Lee's, "I will not be unmindful of anything that concerneth my daughter Ward's good." This letter is without date, except "Sep. 17," but probably may be referred to the present period.

Neither the conversion of her aunt or cousin by Mary, nor that which is also represented in the nineteenth picture of the Painted Life is mentioned

⁷ P.R.O., *Dom. James I.* vol. clxxxviii.

either by herself or by Winefrid. The picture contains two subjects. Miss Gray's interview with the Father of the Society of Jesus had apparently taken place, for safety's sake, in the house where a Protestant had resided, no uncommon precaution where it could be effected. This scene is interwoven on the canvas with another, in which, through Mary's means, the deathbed repentance and conversion of the Protestant lady is delineated. It is thus described in the second part of the nineteenth inscription: (Mary) "also there convinced an obstinate heretic on her deathbed, so that she returned to the one saving faith and received the Holy Viaticum with devotion." Father Lohner mentions this conversion in his *Life of Mary*, but does not name the others.

These short histories leave ample room to imagine how Mary's days were spent in London. The success with which God rewarded her daring attempts, only urged her on to further enterprises, and gave her greater confidence in Him. No detail is given by her biographers as to the number of souls whom she benefited, but from their expressions it was very considerable. Father Dominic Bissel, in his biography of Mary, says of this visit to England: "She led back into the fold of the Catholic Church, not a few of those who had wandered from the path of the true faith. Among a number of others were two ministers, or so-called preachers, who afterwards exhorted others also of their companions to forsake the Calvinistic heresy, which in like manner was happily accomplished." The history of these two ministers shows her not to have been deficient in

knowledge how fittingly to answer the arguments used by Protestant divines of those days, though it may be that her prayers and her holiness of life made as many conversions as her powers of controversy. Her courage and perseverance were indomitable. Vincentio Pageti says in his *Breve Racconto*: "She laboured day and night in seeking to gain lost souls, despising danger either to life or honour, for she was accustomed to say that 'God is not wanting to good wills, and that it gives Him pleasure that we should trust Him, when He gives us light to know that He trusts us.'" God permitted her to see the fruit of her toils, for—

Divers were withdrawn from libertine lives, others put out of occasions, and many that desired to be religious, and had not the means, were holpen and disposed so as they attained the effects. She assisted so many towards their being religious, as herself did not so much as know the persons, when by occasion of seeing her they acknowledged the grace of being religious to have come by her means.

It must always be kept in mind that Mary, while engaged in these bold and dangerous undertakings to gain access and bring help to souls, had not withdrawn herself from ordinary secular life, and the society to which her birth and family connections gave her entrance. It was by means of mixing in a certain measure with the world around her that she hoped to draw souls away from it to God, and for this reason she returned to what she once thought she had renounced for ever, uncongenial as all she found there must have been to her. The recovery

of one soul which had wandered far from God, and of whom she probably heard indirectly, from some frequenter of the gay and dissipated coteries of the day whom she came across, was alone a rich reward, had there been no other. But from the words quoted above, the case was not a solitary one. Our manuscript thus informs us: "Amongst others that were reduced from bad life one was as famous for her birth as enormous for her crime. This party would say she had as a bewitching power to draw one from oneself, and put them where she would and they ought to be."

This "bewitching power" which Mary possessed over the hearts of others sometimes brought disagreeable and certainly unlooked for results to herself. One of these, and doubtless there were others such, forms the twentieth subject of the painted series of pictures. Mary had most likely been in society, joining some circle of friends, with the one object to which she had devoted herself before her eyes, and, while engrossed herself with this, giving pleasure to others, and charming them with the affability and sweetness for which she was so remarkable. Strangers, and probably Protestants among them, were present. Towards evening she returned to her lodgings. She had not long arrived when well-dressed men servants came to the door, bringing with them from their master what the inscription on the painting names as "an elegant collation." Another of Mary's early biographers mentions it as "sweetmeats or confectionery." This was sent by some nobleman, and intended as a complimentary gift, evidently for the

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purpose, according to the fashion of the time, of ingratiating himself with Mary. His efforts had but poor success, however. The inscription tells us how they were received. It runs as follows: "While in London, an elegant collation was sent to Mary from a person of rank, by his servants, but she fearing, and not unjustly, that a snare of the wicked enemy might be hidden underneath, bolted herself into her room, and passed the whole night in prayer and works of penance." The fine collation apparently went back, unlooked at, to its owner.

And now, amidst such scenes of outward toil and activity, and even of adventure, as we may call them, attended by perhaps as dangerous an excitement, the power of attracting others by her own charms, and drawing to herself the love and admiration of all those she met with, we are admitted to one sight of Mary's interior life. Nor shall we be disappointed. It is the one event which she describes herself of all her London experiences, plainly from its importance as touching upon the very object for which she had come to England. She is writing in her Italian life, for those who are to judge of the truth of her vocation, and she therefore has to give some account, first of all, of how she fulfilled the vow she had offered to Almighty God of labouring in England for the souls of others. This she does truthfully, but in as few and general words as possible, passing over every detail which would have told to her own honour. After stating her return to England, she goes on :

And as far as I may judge, I did not spend that time ill, nor was I negligent in doing as far as it was possible to me that for which I went, nor were my few labours altogether in vain, divers now living holily in various religious orders say that they left the world in great part by means of my conversation. Various other good things happened then, which it appears better to omit, because I do not know how to explain myself without so many words, and those so unapt. The following, nevertheless, I ought not to leave out.

One morning, making my meditation coldly, and not at all to my satisfaction, at the end of it I resolved to assist a person to be accepted in some convent who much desired to become a nun, but, wanting a portion, could not otherwise enter one; and then going to dress myself according to the fashion of the country and other circumstances, whilst I adorned my head at the mirror, something very supernatural befell me, similar to that already related on the day of St. Athanasius, but more singular, and, as it appears to me, with greater impetuosity, if greater there could be. I was abstracted from out of my whole being, and it was shown to me with clearness and inexpressible certainty that I was not to be of the Order of St. Teresa, but that some other thing was determined for me, without all comparison more to the glory of God than my entrance into that holy religion would be. I did not see what the assured good thing would be, but the glory to God which was to come through it, showed itself inexplicably and so abundantly as to fill my soul in such a way that I remained for a good space without feeling or hearing anything but the sound, "Glory, Glory, Glory." By accident I was then alone, therefore what external changes this and similar things cause I cannot say, but from the internal feeling and bodily disturbance they must be remarkable; my knowledge fails as to their continuance; all appears to last but a

moment, even at those times when afterwards I made a computation of time, and found it to have been about two hours.

On this occasion a good space of time passed before I recovered, but, returned to myself, and finding my heart full of love for this thing, accompanied by such glory that not yet can I comprehend what it was, and seeing for certain that I was not to be of the Order of St. Teresa, remembering also the vow which I had made of being of that Order if my confessor should command me, I felt great fear of offending God in these two contraries, or of adhering to one or the other side ; to resist that which now had been operated in me I could not, and to have a will in opposition to the vow I ought not. In this conflict, giving myself to prayer, I protested to God, so liberal, that I had not and would not admit on this occasion any other will than His, and, as a testimony and sign that my mind and will were totally to do His without exception, I put on a hair-cloth, which I have forgotten for how long a time I wore, but I believe for some continuance, for I well recollect that through this and other corporal penitences, done for this end during the months that I remained in England, I did no little injury to my health, especially being occupied at that time with some fervour in winning and aiding others, observing (according to my knowledge) the circumstances requisite and suitable to the said business and to my condition. An office but too honourable, but nevertheless painful enough, if not undertaken for Him to Whom we owe all, and through the help of Whose grace alone it is fitly and perseveringly feasible.

The author of Winefrid Wigmore's manuscript places the above occurrence in one of Mary's later residences in England, but her own words are sufficiently explicit to show that it happened during the

eventful visit of 1609. The Painted Life confirms this, for the twenty-first inscription states :

When Mary was in London in the year 1609, after a meditation, which she did not perform as she thought with sufficient fervour, while she was dressing, and purposing, in compensation for this fault, to give the necessary dowry to a lady who had a desire to be a religious, but through failure of means could not put into effect, she fell into an ecstasy, in which she was deprived of the use of all her senses and movements, and clearly recognized that it was not the Divine will that she should enter a severe Order, but that she was called to a far more excellent state, which would without comparison better advance the glory of God. Which glory so absorbed her soul that, after a lapse of two hours, which appeared to her to be a quarter of an hour, she could hear nothing for a long time but this word "Glory," which rang continually in her ears.

The writer of the inscription has not quoted Mary's words correctly. She does not say that she saw that the state she was called to was one which would promote God's glory to a greater degree than a severe order, but that she herself personally, by embracing some state still to be shown to her, would advance the Divine honour far more than she could by entering the Teresian Order. To that Order, moreover, she never had been drawn interiorly. It was in obedience only that she would have entered it, for the Order of the Poor Clares had already completely satisfied all her desires as to an ascetic life.

Winefrid's account contains one or two additional details, and as they must have been received from Mary Ward herself, it is given here likewise. "Once,

after her morning prayer, combing of her head, she was surprised with something above her own forces, and intellectually saw a glory to redound to God so great and so inexpressible, as the more she saw the less she found the end. It took away the sight of her corporal eyes, and in her ears sounded nothing but Glory! Glory! Glory! and this impression and sound in her ears lasted many days. This happened to her in lodgings in St. Clement's Churchyard, in the Strand, in London." The French manuscript edition adds explanatorily: "In the great street which goes from Somerset Palace to the King's Palace."

CHAPTER II.

Mary's First Companions.

1609.

IT is much to be regretted that Mary Ward's autobiographies only contain the history of her earlier years. Her beautiful Italian life, which has now been largely quoted, ends abruptly with the passage at the conclusion of our last chapter. Henceforth therefore her letters and other writings become the source whence the information has to be drawn which comes down to us directly from herself, and in her own words. In her letter to the Nuncio Albergati, written after the year 1618, Mary gives some further explanation of the effects caused in her by the vision in her lodgings in the Strand. She continues thus, after the sentence quoted above in the beginning of the first chapter :

Being there (in England), and thus employed, I had a second infused light in a manner as before, but much more distinct, that the work to be done was not a monastery of Teresians, but a thing much more grateful to God, and so great an augmentation of His glory as I cannot declare, but not any particular what, how, and in what manner such a work should be. Which after this light was past, I reflected upon with some sadness, for though in that instant of time

my understanding was clearly convinced that the thing put before me was truly good, and the same which reason itself would have affected, and my will so possessed, as left without power then, or ever after, to love or elect any contrary thing, yet to have still all denied me, and nothing proposed in particular, seemed somewhat hard: and besides, I was anxious how to govern my affection for the present in these two contraries, as not to have a contrary will to what I had vowed (which was to enter in to the Teresians when I should be commanded) neither to be unanswerable to that which then seemed to be God Almighty's determination (which was not to be Teresian, but some other thing). God holpe [helped] me in this, as, I trust, He will in all.

Mary was still left by Almighty God in darkness as to what His designs for her were. The vow she had made to enter the Order of St. Teresa, if commanded, was not the product of her own mind. In the letter just quoted she gives her reasons for having taken it. The Poor Clares, whom she was then just leaving, had advised her to comply with Father Lee's wishes, and distrusting herself, she had once more involved herself, against her own better judgment, in a difficulty which she says "brought her into great trouble in many ways."

Some of this trouble she was now experiencing. From the passage inserted above it would seem that her vow had given rise to the thought that perhaps, in spite of her non-attraction to it, God meant to make use of her to found a Teresian convent, in the same way that she had already founded a convent of Poor Clares. Some of the results of her visit to England may have confirmed

this imagination. The vision had destroyed it utterly, and "proposed nothing in particular" in its place. Father Lohner, in writing of Mary's stay in England, her zeal for souls, her mortifications, and her distress of mind consequent on the vision, says :

Let us turn our eyes towards the Providence of God to see, if we can, why God ordered or permitted that Mary should be led to this change of her state of life through the guidance of those whom she held to be in the place of God. As far as we can conclude from what afterwards ensued, the design of God was no other than to train Mary's soul and make it perfect in spiritual exercises, so that she might be found fit for a work, for which a great soul, firmly established and tested by all sorts of trials, was needful. She was therefore to deal with her neighbour, but without injury to her interior peace, her meditations, her bodily mortifications, and other spiritual exercises through which the soul is united to God. And therefore her obedience did not injure Mary, but gave her the opportunity to become a perfect instrument for advancing the glory of God in a new way, especially through the female sex.¹

But meantime, though she did not know it, God was Himself putting the material into Mary's hands and using her to obtain the means with which to mould that "good thing," that He had shown her should bring so much glory to Him. For this He had led her to England and given her the power of attracting others to her. The results show how great this power must have been, and how faithfully Mary employed it

¹ "Gottseliges Leben und firtreffliche Tugenden Donna Maria Ward," in manuscript at Nymphenburg, pp. 59, 60.

to draw souls to God. It was, indeed, a gift, unlike the ordinary gifts of nature, possessed by few, and going far beyond a merely external and passing charm or influence, as it is called. Its source lay much deeper. The virtue must have been solid, and the holiness deep and genuine, which induced, not only the young, but those older and experienced and of well-known piety, to place an unbounded confidence in her judgment, so far as that parents should entrust their children, priests their penitents, to her care. She was only four-and-twenty at this time, and was surrounded by friends, both of her own age and a few years younger, from among the principal Catholic families. Her fervour kindled theirs. The consequences as to other religious orders she has already in part mentioned, and they are further conveyed in her few short words to Cardinal Albergati, "My purposed time of stay in England expired, I retired to St. Omer. Divers followed, with intention to be religious where I should be, living together there." Or, as one of the latter expresses it, almost copying Mary's words, "The prefixed time for England being expired, she returned to St. Omer, and in her company divers gentlewomen desirous to make themselves happy by her direction and in her imitation, which brought them to quit country and friends and to cross the sea."

The future lives of these "gentlewomen" being closely interwoven with that of Mary Ward, and having a most important influence upon her vocation and career, they themselves must now be severally introduced to the reader. They are thus brought

before us in the inscription of the twenty-second picture in the Painted Life: "Mary, while in London in the year 1609, by her edifying life and fervent words, won for the Heavenly Bridegroom several young maidens of high degree, who, to escape from the snares of the world, went with her to St. Audomaro" (St. Omer) "to serve God, under her direction, in a religious state, to which they were led by her example."

The picture as it hung on the walls of the convent in Augsburg was well known to the Englische Fraulein, Mrs. Mary Cramlington, in the year 1727 or thereabouts. This nun, as already mentioned, was for several years occupied in making researches and collecting materials for a Life of Mary Ward. She was acquainted with all the recollections and traditions of the elder nuns, who had been pupils and novices of these first companions of Mary Ward, and she received much valuable information from them, which, she says, they gave her for the furtherance of her object. She herself was of an old Northumbrian family, the Cramlingtons of Cramlington, which had intermarried frequently with the Lawsons of Northumberland, but which is now itself extinct. Her father was Andrew Cramlington, and her mother, of another equally ancient northern house, Elisabeth St. George. She was educated at the Hammersmith Convent of the English Institute B.V.M., and entered it as a nun at Munich, in 1681. Helena Catesby, who founded the House of the Institute at Burghausen two years subsequently, and who had known Mary Ward as a child, was her Novice Mistress, and afterwards her

Superior for many years. Mary Cramlington was not herself deficient in the heroic, enduring spirit which, as we shall find, so eminently characterized Mary Ward's first companions. She went more than once to England from Germany,—no slight undertaking two hundred years ago—to serve the Institute. In 1713 she had been sent to the Convent at York, and afterwards to assist the Superior of the Nuns of the Institute at Hammer-smith, but did not remain there at that time. Her notes, written down on purpose for the biography, are now at Nymphenburg, and will be quoted here on several occasions.

She says then: "The ladies that crossed the sea with our venerable Foundress, with the resolution to live according to her direction and under her obedience, were Mrs. Mary Poyntz, Mrs. Winefrid Wigmore, Mrs. Joanna Browne, Mrs. Susanna Rookwood, and Mrs. Catharine Smith. These five were certainly with her at that time, and five persons are also delineated in the Painted Life." To begin according to the order in which Mary Cramlington places them. Mrs. Mary Poyntz, a lady gifted with all that can be most highly esteemed, in person, birth, and fortune, belonged to the ancient family of that name then living at Iron Acton, Gloucestershire, about nine miles from Bristol, and possessing also other large property in the county. Her father was Edward Poyntz, son of Sir John Poyntz, whose ancestors had come over from Normandy with William the Conqueror, and settled in Gloucestershire, one of them acquiring, by marriage with an heiress of the Acton family in 1307,

the large property on which from that time they had resided.²

Mary's great grandfather, Sir Nicholas Poyntz, married Margaret Stanley, daughter of the Earl of Derby. The grandfather of this Earl was the Stanley, Earl of Derby, who turned the fortunes of Richard the Third and placed the crown on the head of Henry the Seventh after the battle of Bosworth. By marrying the Countess of Richmond, as her second husband, he became Henry's stepfather. The Poyntz family was one of considerable note during the reigns of Henry the Eighth, Elizabeth, and James the First, and mostly steadfast Catholics. Mary's mother was of an equally pious family, and with as long a pedigree. She was Maria, daughter of Richard Wigmore, of Lucton, Herefordshire, and Anne Mornington, of Sarnesfield, another faithful Catholic house. Of the Wigmores there will be more to be said further on. It suffices here to mention that both Mary Poyntz and Winefrid Wigmore were, by their relationship

² Some few years ago portions of the old manor-house still existed, used as a farm, and giving evidence of having been a very extensive building. At the east end was the chapel, since converted into a cellar, and some remains of painted glass were still left in the Gothic windows. The great chamber or hall, which was very spacious and lofty, had been of late years formed into several rooms, the upper part of the walls, richly painted in fresco, being still visible under the roof and above the ceilings. In the church are the tombs of two of Mary Poyntz' ancestors: the figures are engraved on two slabs of stone. Round their margin is inscribed: "Here lyeth Robert Poyntz, Lord of Iron Acton, and this stepyl here maked who deyed the fiftene day of Juune the yeere of owre Lord MCCCCXX—" (the figures which are broken should make 1437) "of whos sowle God have mercy Amen." This Robert Poyntz built the church tower. His first wife has a similar inscription. The knight is in chain armour, and the lady in a loose garment with her hair in a net.

with this family, connected with the ancient Earls of Cornwall, and with the Earls and the pious and loyal Marquis of Worcester, the Earls of Pembroke, and the family of the Herberts.

The chroniclers of Mary Ward's history disagree as to the age of Mary Poyntz when she accompanied the former to St. Omer. The difficulty arose from the age at which she died, as given on her tombstone, which was still standing in one of the chapels of the Cathedral of Augsburg in the early part of last century, when Mary Cramlington wrote. It was the opinion of the latter, drawn from the statements of the elder nuns who had been Mary Poyntz' pupils and novices, that the inscription was correct in stating her to have left her country at the age of sixteen. The discrepancy resulting from her age being given as sixty-three instead of seventy-three, at her death in 1667. This Mary Cramlington, from her traditional knowledge, does not hesitate to consider a mistake. It may have arisen from the accidental omission of one X in the lettering, as the figures were in Roman character.

It was from Winefrid Wigmore that Mary Cramlington learned the particulars of her early history through Helena Catesby. From these we find that Mary Ward was related to the Poyntz family, and was staying with Mary Poyntz's father in 1609. This was probably in Gloucestershire, for in a list of recusants to be "made profit of" by James the First's needy dependents, of about the year 1605, Edward Poyntz is called "of Tobington Park, Gloucestershire," and is given to a Mr. Stephen Le Sieur, in case two

other Catholics named also, "be already entered for others." As Mary Ward was apparently at this house in 1609, he perhaps for that time escaped any considerable loss of property. But he was a marked man, for his name had already being sent by the High Sheriff of Herefordshire to the Privy Council in 1605, as "Mr. Poynes (Poyntz), dwelling in the Forest of Dean, and the brother of Sir John Poynes, who keepeth in his house two Jesuit priests, and is himself altogether Jesuited."

Soon after Mary Ward's arrival at Tobington Park, she was walking in the pleasure-garden of the house with Edward Poyntz, while his daughter Mary was standing at the window of one of the rooms above. When she thus saw Mary Ward, as it appears for the first time, gazing long and earnestly at her, she exclaimed to the standers-by: "See, there she is, through whose instructions God will save me!" From that moment young Mary attached herself to Mary Ward, and would not consent to be separated from her, obtaining her father's leave to accompany her to St. Omer when she returned there a few months subsequently. The warnings he had received, and among them those mentioned above, as to the insecurity of life and property in England, as well as his confidence in Mary Ward's character, were probably a strong plea in favour of an arrangement which would place his child in a safe shelter where she could become a religious.

But though Edward Poyntz seems to have given his permission without difficulty, there was another party concerned in the new plan, who had not the

same ready disposition to part with one so beautiful and engaging as Mary Poyntz. We will give what happened in Mary Cramlington's words.

When she was still a young lady in England, she was to be married to a cavalier of rank, a suitable match for her position in life, and who had been a long time wooing her. But after having seen our Foundress, and been, as you are aware, so wonderfully enlightened and called to a religious life, she bereft this cavalier, who was the last of his name and noble house, and was very rich, of all hope of ever obtaining her hand, and I believe in order to free herself from him, she revealed to him her resolution of becoming a religious. He then solicited her to give him her portrait. She positively refused at first, but at length she promised, and had this well-known picture painted. One part of the face was her living likeness, with a fine perfect eye which exactly resembled hers. From the cheek down to the chest she was pale and emaciated like a dying person. The upper part on the other side was painted like a death's head, a skull, and from the cheek down to the chest the flesh was quite corrupted and eaten by worms. This likeness of herself she gave him, and it made such an impression upon his mind that he forsook all and entered a religious order.

The remarkable portrait³ thus depicted is still

³ See the accompanying engraving. Another original portrait of Mary Poyntz, formerly at Augsburg, in the convent of the Institute founded by her, is in the possession of the Nuns of the English Institute B.V.M., St. Mary's Convent, Haverstock Hill, a filiation from Bavaria, founded in England, after many difficulties, by Rev. Mother Barratt, in 1862. By the kind invitation of the Bishop of Clifton, the nuns settled first in Gloucester, whence they came to London, at the request of the Dominican Fathers of Haverstock Hill, with the concurrence of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Rev. Mother Barratt, who had been a nun at Augsburg for twelve years, was the first English lady who had been professed in Bavaria for more than a hundred years.



*Mary Peyntz.
Vera Effigies. Circa 1609.*

*From the original oil painting of the same size, in the
possession of the Xmas of the English Institute of the
Blessed Virgin Mary, Nymphenburg, Bavaria*

remaining at the Convent of the English Institute at Nymphenburg. It is a very small finely painted oil picture on worm-eaten canvas. The living portion of the face is very beautiful ; a large soft dark eye and delicately marked eyebrow, a slightly arched nose with a high forehead, whence the long brown hair has been pushed back, and falls down over the shoulder in front. The rest of the face is as Mary Cramlington describes it, and must have made the receiver start with horror as he unfolded the long-desired possession. We can only lament that the name of this cavalier has not been handed down together with the picture, which he probably returned when he made up his mind to become a religious. Mary Cramlington adds : "I do not know his name, but our late Superioress" (Mary Anna Barbara Babthorpe), "who sent me this painting as a great favour, and who was a very holy woman and had been from her fourth year under the care of and brought up by her cousin, Mary Poyntz, told me his name, I believe, but I cannot remember it, and I could not afterwards make inquiries about it."

Mrs. Mary Anna Barbara Babthorpe, the fifth Chief Superioress of the English Virgins, is the principal authority also for the statement, that from the time Mary Poyntz first saw Mary Ward, she never left her, and that she attached herself to her, and would not part from her from that moment, staying with her in England and crossing with her to St. Omer. The elder nuns known to Mary Cramlington all agreed in the tradition as to this fact. She was never afterwards for any length of time separated from her

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during life, looking upon Mary Ward as a mother whom God had given her in a remarkable way, and devoting herself to her as such. Nor was she unworthy of a friend so gifted, Mary Poyntz's mind and character being, as we shall hereafter find, of a very high order. It appears probable that she had one sister, named Frances, who afterwards joined the Institute, and her brother, John Poyntz, born in 1602, entered the Society of Jesus, and was on the English Mission in 1624. He was subsequently Rector of the English College at Rome from 1659-63.

Of all Mary Ward's first companions who followed her out of England to share in her vocation, whatever it should prove to be, as if irresistibly drawn to live under her guidance and by her counsels, Winefrid Wigmore was the one whom she loved the most tenderly. It is very observable in her letters that she writes heart to heart to Winefrid concerning her own inward feelings, and treats her with a confident intimacy of mutual friendship which is not found to an equal degree in her intercourse with the rest. If we knew nothing else, to have been the best loved friend of Mary Ward is a commendation which almost tells its own tale of the character of Winefrid Wigmore. We feel that there must have been a certain amount of mental power, sweetness of disposition, and, above all, holiness and beauty of soul in her to have drawn them so closely together, and all that is known concerning her confirms this impression.

Mary Poyntz and Winefrid Wigmore were first cousins, the latter being the daughter of William Wigmore, of Lucton, Herefordshire, whose sister

Maria, the wife of Edward Poyntz, was Mary's mother. Winefrid was the same age as Mary Ward, being born in the year 1585, and appears to have been one of the eldest of her family. Her mother came from a very pious stock, that of the Throgmortons, of Warwickshire. She was Anne, daughter of Sir John Throgmorton, President of Wales, "a vigorous champion of the Catholics, and permitting priests to frequent his house, who thought themselves nowhere so safe as under the shelter of his roof and protection."⁴ Of Lady Throgmorton, Winefrid's grandmother, it is said that "besides her invincible constancy to the Catholic faith, whence she never swerved in the least, she showed such tender affection for all the poor, especially for priests, that she was truly called the hope and refuge of the sick and miserable."

Anne Wigmore, Winefrid's mother, was not less fervent in her religion, and accordingly we find one of her sons writing of her on his entering the English College, Rome :⁵ "My mother was always a Catholic, and most strict in enforcing Catholic discipline in her family. For many years she kept a priest as her chaplain, and when she died left this heritage to her

⁴ Two of his sons suffered torture for the faith ; another, Edward Throgmorton (Winefrid's uncle therefore), had from his singular piety and holiness of life been allowed to make the vows of the Society of Jesus on his death-bed at the English College, Rome, at the age of twenty, in 1582. His life, in an ancient manuscript said by some to be written by the blessed martyr, Father Robert Southwell, may, in its touching beauty and sanctity, recall those of St. Aloysius and Blessed John Berchmans. It is from this source that the quotations in the text are taken.

⁵ *Records*, series x. p. 423.

children and family." But as was too frequently the case, the loss of estate and position was too strong a temptation to Winefrid's father and to her grandfather, Sir John Throgmorton. Both of them sacrificed their conscience, and conformed to the law sufficiently to avoid its penalties. William Wigmore, "as soon as he was of age and succeeded to his inheritance, went once or twice a year to the Protestant church, yet he never allowed his children to be brought up otherwise than as Catholics," thus manifesting what his real convictions were. He had a numerous family, and this care for the souls of his children had its reward, for six of them became religious. Three of his sons, perhaps influenced by what they heard of their holy uncle, Edward Throgmorton, entered the Society of Jesus.⁶ Their elder brother, John Wigmore, inherited his father's estates, and appears to have remained a faithful Catholic. Winefrid had several sisters. The two who entered religion were Elisabeth, who became first Benedictine Abbess at Pontoise, and Helen, a Teresian nun at Antwerp, where Teresa Ward was already Sub-Prioress. Through her mother, Winefrid was connected with the families of Lord Monteagle, Morley, Berkeley, and Vaux.

Mary Ward probably knew Winefrid before she went to St. Omer in 1606, for she was in some way related to her, and they may also have met in War-

⁶ The elder of the three, Robert, died a novice at Louvain in 1613. The other two, Richard and William, became professed Fathers, and laboured on the English mission under the name of Campian. They were students at St. Omer when Winefrid went there in 1609.

wickshire that year, where we have heard of Mary as apparently present at the gathering of Catholics at Coughton, the mansion home of some of the Throgmortons, just before the Gunpowder Plot. If they became friends then, at their second meeting in 1609, the friendship ripened into one which was to be life-long. Winefrid perhaps owed her vocation to be a nun to Mary's words and example, as was the case with so many of her friends. Of her early life, it is told us (in the French Obituary of the first nuns who were with Mary Ward at St. Omer, written probably for the Institute-House at Paris, and now in the Archives at Nymphenburg), that "from her childhood she so diligently furnished herself with modesty, piety and devotion that by many she was always called 'the little saint.'" Such was the love and respect with which she inspired her youthful companions that her presence had the effect of restraining them from the least unbecoming word or action. Her love to the holy Mother of God was very remarkable, and seemed as it were born with her, and at five years old she began to say the great day hours, or as it is now called the Little Office of our Lady. She had also a great gift of prayer. Mary Cramlington in writing of her says: "Mrs. Helena Catesby (who had been a pupil of Winefrid Wigmore's, and was herself a saintly woman) could not relate enough to me of the eminent virtues of this lady." Helena and her fellow-boarders, she adds, had come to the knowledge that their mistress spent the greater part of her nights in prayer.

As to her mental powers, we are told that her intellect was keen, and that she possessed great

wisdom and discretion. She was highly educated, and could speak five languages fluently. To this outline of Winefrid's character may be added two qualities, which in studying her writings, and the letters Mary Ward addressed to her, approve themselves to the reader as especially her own, a strong power of sympathy with others, and a great and humble forgetfulness of self. With regard to the latter, it is noticeable that though the French obituary states, that "there was no business nor undertaking of Mary Ward's in which she did not take part, sharing also in all her many troubles and difficulties," yet in her biography of Mary, she scarcely ever mentions herself as the eye-witness of the remarkable occurrences which she relates, or when she does, it is as if she were writing of others. No information remains as to Winefrid's personal appearance, but a holy practice which her novice, Helena Catesby, learned she says from her, throws perhaps some light upon what her exterior may have been. In one of her Spiritual Exercises Helena writes: "Seeing that Christ did by His Divine looks draw and allure hearts, I begged the grace also to draw, not to myself, but to Him alone, that I may in some small manner say as my dear Mrs. Wigmore—*Qui vident me glorificent Te.*"

The chief authority respecting the parentage of the next of Mary's companions, Joanna or Jane Browne, is to be found in Bishop Blaise's commendatory letter of 1615, quoted above. From the writings of Mary and her friends we should gain no clue. All being equally loved by her so that

they loved and served God, "whatsoever seemed great in the world was mean and of no value to her," and it was by accident that any incident connected with the family history of her associates has been recorded. Of Mrs. Browne's father the letter states: "He was a knight and paternal uncle to Viscount Montague." One of Winwood's lists⁷ of Catholics abroad in the same year, says: "Sir George Browne hath a daughter living with the nuns at St. Omer's." Mary Cramlington's belief that she was related to Helena Catesby⁸ is therefore correct, as one of her aunts, a sister of the conspirator, was the wife of Henry Browne. Jane's mother was one of the Tyrwhitts of Kettelby, Lincolnshire, sister of Mrs. Ambrose Rookwood and of Lady Babthorpe. Her knowledge of Mary Ward is easily explained by this connection, and it may be mentioned besides that her cousins, Anna and Magdalena Browne, the daughters of her uncle Henry, were being educated at St. Omer when Mary was there in 1608, and were afterwards professed as nuns at Gravelines. The Duchess of Feria, who was a Dormer, was also related to Jane's eldest uncle Anthony, through his wife. All the Brownes seem to have been staunch Catholics. Jane's father lived

⁷ In the Public Record Office.

⁸ This belief was gained from a curious pedigree, emblazoned with coats of arms, on a roll of wide parchments, thirty or forty feet in length, well worthy of a place in the Herald's College, which is still preserved at the Institute House at Burghausen. It was brought to Bavaria two hundred years ago by Helena's nephew, and is very voluminous, tracing the Catesby family very minutely through all its numerous noble and even royal branches and alliances, through twenty descents from the Conqueror to James I.

at Shefford in Berkshire, and is named in a list⁹ "concerning Seminaries and Recusants," in 1583, as "keeping there Twyford, a priest, in the habit of a serving-man." Her brother, George Browne of Shefford, married one of the Blounts of Maple Durham. It was her first cousin, Viscount Montague, who so bravely stood up in the House of Lords in 1604 to oppose the Bill passed by James I., confirming the persecuting laws of the last reign against Catholics, and adding others still more severe. He was sent to prison for his speech.

Helena Catesby appears to have been the chief source whence Mary Cramlington obtained her knowledge concerning Jane Browne. "When Helena spoke of her," she says, "it was always with great tenderness. She at all times showed a high esteem for her personally, and considered her to be a great favourite with God." It was from Mary Poyntz, Catharine Smith, and Winefrid Wigmore, her own Novice-Mistress, that Helena must have heard the details concerning their old companion which justified so strong an expression, but few of these details unfortunately remain. Jane Browne was the oldest in years of the party bound for St. Omer, and was apparently twenty-eight or twenty-nine at that time. We shall hear further of her in the course of our history.

It is a matter of conjecture alone that Catharine Smith may have belonged to the Carrington family, the Smiths of Ashby Folville, Leicestershire, pious and loyal Catholics, who both suffered for their faith

⁹ P.R.O., *Dom. Eliz.* clxviii. 33.

and later on fought for Charles I., so that one of them, Sir John Smith, brother of the first Lord Carrington, was the last of the knights bannerets, being knighted by the King on the field of battle at Edge Hill for recovering the royal standard from the enemy. The fact that the Smiths had intermarried with the Nevilles of Holt, Leicestershire, Mary Ward's relatives, suggests that Catharine may have been one of the numerous families of daughters which their pedigrees mention. Catharine Smith's age is uncertain; she was said to be twenty-five or twenty-six when she went to St. Omer. The old French obituary at Nymphenburg, which names her as one of Mary Ward's first companions, throws no light upon this, or upon her birth. It writes of her as "endowed with immoveable courage even in hunger, thirst, and necessity," and as possessing a high degree of humility and other virtues belonging to a character of no common merit.

We have already hinted that Mary Ward's visit to Coldham Hall in 1609 was productive of even a greater good than the conversion of a soul which had been long held fast in the subtle snares of heresy, great and dear to God as that good was. But her second achievement was, as we shall find, the means eventually of bringing in a whole harvest of souls, besides opening the way for a life of heroic devotion to one who was afterwards a noble confessor of the faith on several occasions. Mary was no stranger in the Rookwood family when she went to stay with them during her residence in England. We know that several of its members were at Coughton,

Warwickshire, to meet Father Garnett, three years before, and that Mary's uncles and aunts were their intimate friends. She had most likely been at Coldham before she went abroad, and no doubt she had endeared herself to many among the family, and was as welcome there on her return as we find her elsewhere. Susanna Rookwood was probably one of this number, and Mary must have seen the germs in her of a religious vocation, as well as of a love of souls, and soon won her as a companion and sharer in her future labours.

Ambrose Rookwood's parents were alive at the time that he suffered for the Gunpowder Plot. It is said of them,¹⁰ "They were very virtuous and had suffered much persecution for the faith, both in payment of money and loss of their goods and many other molestations, yet was their home a continual receptacle for priests, and a place where many other Catholics did often find great spiritual comforts, the house being a very fair great house and his living very sufficient." Such we may believe was Susanna's home, as there is every reason to believe that she was the conspirator's sister. There is, however, no daughter of her name mentioned in any of the ancient manuscript pedigrees of the family,¹¹ except Ambrose's half-sister Susanna, who married Robert Towle of Lincolnshire. Ambrose had besides three unmarried sisters, like himself the children of Robert Rookwood by his second wife Dorothy, daughter of Sir William Drury, of Haw-

¹⁰ Father Gerard's Narrative, *Condition of Catholics*, p. 85.

¹¹ Nichols' *Collectanea*, vol. ii. p. 143.

stead. Of these, Dorothy was a nun at Louvain, and died in 1607. The names of the other two were Cordell and Winefrid, and according to the custom of changing the name for various causes on entering religion, it may not without reason be supposed, in default of other information, that one of them altered her name to Susanna on joining Mary Ward. In one of Mary's letters, she is mentioned by the familiar name of "Doll Rookwood," which may perhaps point rather to the former of the two. To take the name of her married half-sister would the better conceal her in her enterprises, and no doubt all Ambrose's relations had to act with great caution to avoid suspicion as far as possible after his ill-judged attempts.

Supposing our inference to be true, Susanna had three brothers besides Ambrose, who was, Father Gerard says, twenty-seven or twenty-eight at the time of the Plot. One of these became a priest, another a Franciscan monk, and the third entered the Society of Jesus, and was on the English Mission. She was herself twenty-six years of age when she crossed to St. Omer with Mary Ward. The facts which are known concerning Susanna's future life will develop her character in the course of this history. Hers was a soul full of fervour, resembling Mary Ward in her ardent zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of her neighbours; nothing daunted her if either were concerned.

We are left to imagine how Mary and her five friends accomplished the difficult task of leaving England. It does not appear how they escaped the

vigilant eyes, ever on the watch for transgressors against the oppressive law which forbade women to go out of the kingdom without a special license, or how such a license was obtained for so large a party, whose youth alone would betray the nefarious intention of seeking a home in some foreign convent.

CHAPTER III.

Other Foundation Stones.

1609.

IF Mary Ward's journey to England had been lonely and anxious, especially from the uncertainty of the future which lay before her, the outward circumstances of her return to St. Omer must have formed a pleasurable contrast in many respects. It is more likely from the perilous state of the times that the six ladies did not all journey together, but any way Mary would not have been without a companion in the person of young Mary Poyntz, who was already her inseparable friend. When the whole party met together on their arrival, they amounted at once to a considerable household. Besides Mary's five associates, each of them was accompanied by some companion or attendant of humbler degree, sent by their parents to convoy them and assist them in their needs, who remained afterwards, joining them in their devout life, each according to her state. Winefrid,

who could now write as an eye-witness, tells us in few words how they set up housekeeping together. "She (Mary) bought a house which she furnished and ordered in manner so as to live in regular observance, and their clothes conformable, very grave and retired but not of the monastical." A happy household they must have been, for they all, like the early Christians, had but one heart and one soul, and one object, the will of God, their way of life, also, in its simplicity and devotion, framed something after the same model. Mary Ward was their leader and mother, and another bond of union among them,¹ for to practise her virtues, to place themselves under her guidance, and live as she lived, and finally to embrace the same state of religious life which she would choose, was the end for which they had left their friends and country to follow her.

It was, if considered attentively, a remarkable and unusual calling. God, "the mighty Master of souls," was fashioning them as He would, leading them to desire the highest perfection and union with Himself, apart from the world, but giving them no attraction to the then known forms of the devoted life in the Church. But, by the example, and the graces which He bestowed on one of His servants, He was kindling in them an ardent longing to spend themselves for the salvation of their neighbours, a work and vocation from all active participation in which hitherto women were supposed to be shut out.

It is difficult for us, in the days in which we live, to understand all that was strange and novel in the

¹ Father Lohner, *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 61.

intentions of these young ladies. The whole remaining life of Mary Ward was to be a struggle against obstacles, rising from the state of the Church and of society, in her times, of which we cannot, without effort, form a perfect appreciation. The great shock of the preceding century had revealed a great amount of disorder among the religious orders—so great that at one time ideas were current at Rome of a general suppression. The Council of Trent, moreover, had enjoined a more strict observance of inclosure on the communities of women. Under the circumstances of the great Catholic reaction of that time, it was inevitable that many zealous souls should be moved to the foundation of active Orders or Congregations of women, in order to meet the crying necessities of the age. But uncloistered nuns had been hitherto supposed to be altogether an anomaly, and for long after they were first seen, during their struggle to take a place among the accredited workers in the Church, they were considered by many as barely tolerable, and requiring, if tolerated, great restraints and surveillance. Mary must have told each of her companions a portion at least of her inward experiences and uncertainties as to the future, she could not have led them blindfold; yet they were willing and glad to cast in their lot with hers and to share her present unsettled state. So God drew them on through her to trust themselves to Him and what His Providence should develope. Mary writes a few years subsequently of the "miraculous calls"² of some of those with her and their holy lives as a proof by

² Letter to the Nuncio Albergati.

which "it would manifestly appear that God's hand were in the work." She might have added the fact that so many souls of no ordinary calibre endowed with rare powers and gifts, both of nature and grace, should have all received the same preparatory interior guidance from God, and been contented to wait, not a short time only, but for long years, in the ignorance of any certainty as to His will for them for the future.

There remain still two of this courageous and devoted household of Englishwomen at St. Omer, of whose characters a few words have to be said. According to the testimony of the picture in the Painted Life, there were five friends only with whom Mary Ward for the second time left her native country. But a further tradition existed in the time of Mary Cramlington, which she received from the nuns, and among others of them by word of mouth from Mrs. Elisabeth Rantienne,³ shortly before her death at the age of eighty-four, an Englishwoman who in her youth was personally well acquainted with Mary Poyntz. By this tradition there were two others, who if they did not actually cross the Channel with Mary Ward, joined her immediately, and were always reckoned among her first companions and disciples. These were Barbara Babthorpe and Barbara Ward.

The former has already been introduced to the reader as the friend of Mary Ward's girlhood at Babthorpe, Barbara's home in Yorkshire, and as associated with her in listening to Margaret Garrett's tales of

³ Foundress of the House of the Institute, Mindelheim, Bavaria, 1703.

conventual life which had given rise to Mary's first desires for the religious state. These tales may have sown the good seed in little Barbara's heart also, though she was then only seven or eight years old, and Mary's example brought it finally to maturity. She was the youngest of the three daughters of Mary's kind guardians, whose house had been the shelter and chosen home of her youth, Sir Ralph Babthorpe and his wife Grace, who in after years was a nun at Louvain. Some particulars of the life of this brave and faithful Catholic lady have already been given.⁴ Barbara's two sisters had married Sir George Palmes and John Constable of Carethorpe before she left England. We shall hear further of one of the daughters of the latter, as well as of several others of Barbara's female relations in the course of this history. She herself had been born in the hottest time of animosity against Catholics in Yorkshire, and must have been inured from her cradle to hear of pursuivants' visits, searches for hidden priests, and citations before the President in the cause of religion.

Since Mary Ward's residence with them, the whole Babthorpe family had become increasingly the objects of bitter persecution. The Protestant Archbishop Matthews was especially hostile to Sir Ralph. He had already caused his children to be re-baptized by a Protestant minister, though they had been baptized, when newly born, by Catholic priests, through the watchful care of their mother, "who was never without two or three priests in the house, even in the

⁴ Part i. ch. 3.

most cruel times." We know also that she and her husband had been for several years in prison. Citations against Sir Ralph were now issued monthly, in the most odious and disgraceful terms, and read publicly in the Protestant churches, and to avoid appearing before the courts, and the visits of pursuivants, he was driven from home and obliged to conceal himself or fly into another county. After inflicting exorbitant fines in consequence, the Archbishop at length, under the statutes enacted by James the First, seized on two-thirds of his estates. The one-third left to him was before long all but exhausted by further fines, and in 1612 he left England and went to live at Louvain on the poor remnants of his fortune. Sir Ralph had been a man of very large property, and it is said of him that "he was so well beloved in his country, for his bountiful and good disposition, that he had not so much as one enemy." Besides Babthorpe and Osgodby he had other mansions, and "thirty retainers," as well as a numerous establishment. His fidelity to the faith reduced him to utter poverty, and he died, we learn, with scarcely a servant to attend him in his old age. His death took place suddenly whilst in the midst of making the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius at Louvain in 1617.

It was perhaps on occasion of the removal of the family to London, to escape the heavy fines still inflicted after the division of Sir Ralph's property, that Barbara obtained leave to try her vocation to religion abroad. The old Louvain Manuscript, which gives the history of Lady Babthorpe's profession there, says: "Her daughter Barbara had been at St.

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Benedict's at Brussels, but could not go forward for a defect in her throat,"⁵ which prevented her perhaps from being able to sing, and so from being a choir nun. Her friend Mary Ward must, at the time of her leaving England, have been on the eve of being professed, as she would think, as a Poor Clare. To that Order Barbara was not herself attracted, probably as being too severe for her. Divine Providence, by means of the above-named natural impediment, hindered her from entering as a Benedictine and reunited her to her friend. Two of her brothers, Ralph and Thomas Babthorpe, at the time she went to St. Omer, were being educated at the College there, and subsequently entered the Society of Jesus, the latter being Rector of the English College at Rome from 1650—1653, when once more, as we shall find, the brother and sister were strangely brought into near neighbourhood to each other. A third brother, Robert, became a Benedictine. Sir William, Barbara's eldest brother, finally sold Babthorpe and Osgodby, and entered the Spanish service. He had a numerous family of children and grandchildren, many of whom were greatly gifted. Barbara's choice in uniting herself so closely to Mary Ward and her work produced important results as to the future career of several among them, whose talents were of eminent service to both for a long series of years afterwards.

Barbara was seventeen, only a year older than Mary Poyntz, when she came from Brussels to join her cousin at St Omer. She was already highly

⁵ *Troubles*, First Series, p. 236.

educated and very well read, and being still so young, she probably owed some portion of her further mental cultivation to Mary Ward's care and direction after she became one of her new household. As she grew older, Barbara became a very valued and trusted friend of Mary's, and the posts of difficulty and authority which she soon occupied show her to have shared the capacity and intellectual qualities of others of her family, and to have had great powers of government. She is also said to have possessed a striking and unusual gift of eloquence of speech, with which she won the hearts of those with whom she conferred, and which aided her in leading and influencing those under her.

We now come to the last of those who are especially named as Mary's early friends, though, in matter of fact, the first and nearest to her, her own sister Barbara. It seems, perhaps, strange that nothing is known of her younger years, nor even with any certainty by what means she was led to embrace the vocation of a religious. This meagre amount of information, both concerning Barbara and Mary Ward's other near relations, as well as the lack of many details in the history of the period of her life to which we are now approaching, may be accounted for by a disastrous occurrence, feelingly related by Mary Cramlington in her historical notes which she was collecting about the year 1725. She says: "About thirty or forty years ago, an iron chest was sent to us from Rome full of valuable documents and writings of our foundress, through a merchant, whose ship foundered at sea, and thereby all our manuscripts

were lost in the ocean, which loss could be regretted with tears of blood." She adds quaintly and naturally enough, "If God had only not allowed this! His holy will be done in everything." The existence of these lost documents would probably answer many difficult questions.

With regard to Barbara Ward's religious vocation, it may well be conjectured that it was her sister's example which first woke up her desire for it. It may be gathered from the words of one of her Sisters in religion, who wrote of her at her death to their community, that the final call was a sudden one, and that she acted on it without delay. Mother Margaret Hord says of her in this account of her last hours, which is still preserved in manuscript:

Hearing herself called when she was in the world from all what nature or sense could desire, she presently resolved without further deliberation, and would not stand, as many others do, *vult et non vult*. Unto which calling of Christ's how well she answered, it is not unknown to us all: for Him she left both friends and country; for Him the world and pleasures therein; to Him she gave all she had, and with these gifts she (indeed) gave herself. She left all, my dear Sisters, not as Abraham who, after he was called, stayed to take his worldly substance, but rather like unto her patron the holy Father, St. Ignatius, who never thought he had given enough until he had stripped himself of the clothes from his back.⁶

We could wish of Mother Margaret as of other writers of her day, that she would have given a

⁶ Two ancient copies of this manuscript exist, one in the Barberini Palace, Rome; the other, somewhat abbreviated, among the Nymphenburg Archives.

few plain facts instead of the enigmatical pious sentiments with which she praises the memory of Barbara Ward. As it is, it may, perhaps, be inferred that the latter was in Yorkshire, not in London, when Mary started for St. Omer, and that feeling drawn to follow her example, she took the first opportunity, regardless of difficulties or future consequences, without an outfit, and perhaps even portionless, to join her abroad.

Barbara would appear to have resembled Mary herself in qualities of mind and sweetness of disposition. Mother Margaret says of her that she was "one of a profound judgment, singular wit, and great resolutions in any business whatsoever, though never so full of impossibilities, and her invincible courage so great, that her voice, presence, and countenance were sufficient to have animated the most fearful or tepidest heart in the world. Thus while she served others she neglected herself, and like a true scholar of such a master, trampled all difficulties under her feet." Whether she bore any likeness to her sister in person we do not hear, but among seventy-four resolutions written by her, and found after her death, was the following, which suggests in some measure the tranquil composure of manner and countenance which were so attractive in Mary Ward :

My looks shall be always pleasant, meek, modest, and grave, high in God, yet full of humility, not contemning anything, nor giving way to the least occasion wherein the Divine Majesty or others might be offended. My conversation shall be substantial, civil, sincere, gaining, and suitable to the parties' disposition with whom I speak. My

countenance and exterior comportment of body shall be even, quiet, and decently ordered, so as may give all sorts of people, both secular and religious, friends and enemies, full satisfaction, and myself remain immoveable and retired in God.⁷

Mary Ward was "wont to say, that in Barbara were summed up all that could be desired in a sister, in a friend, and in a subject." These few words amply show not only the opinion she had of Barbara's merits but the love and union which existed between the two sisters, and with what joy the former must have welcomed Barbara's arrival as an addition to the happy party of friends who were already living together. In return, Barbara had a full and just appreciation of Mary's character, and her veneration and devotion towards her were unbounded, as we shall find. A few short fragments still exist, written by Barbara, of what was intended to be an entire history of Mary Ward's work. These fragments are a copy only, the original may perhaps have gone down to the bottom of the sea in the unfortunate iron chest mentioned above. They are in an ancient, clear, and stiff hand, the same in which some of Mary's meditations are transcribed, which are corrected here and there in her own handwriting, thus proving the copyist to have been one of her contemporaries. They are headed, "Copied out of three severall papers of Mother Barbara Ward's hand," and they begin thus: "Out of the 1. paper." "1619. 24 of February, being the day of St. Matthew"

⁷ From "A copy of Mother Barbara Ward, her holy purposes," &c., Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

(Mathias), "I began this work wh. I will not cease to crave may be much for God's honour and for the profit of those who read it hereafter." After some sentences concerning Mary's residence with the Poor Clares and her founding a new monastery of their Order, she continues, "This had such success and progress in virtue, religious discipline, and sanctity as at this present it remains and daily increases to God's greater honour and the good of our country. After which she, directed by God, went into England, where her carriage, comportment, and external consorted with all sorts of persons in the best, substantial, most fashionable and religious manner that could be wished. After a year or more stay, she returned with some other gentlewomen which, to join with her in this our course, she had there gathered. They were of good means and worth, some of whose friends had suffered much persecution and imprisonment for the Catholic faith."⁸ These were the seven richly gifted souls whom God had drawn around Mary and who became, as it were, seven foundation stones upon which she was to build up a work to His glory. It may be said of them that their heroic lives would each form a marvellous and edifying history, if told separately.

⁸ Among the Nymphenburg Manuscripts ; written on a large sheet of coarse, discoloured letter paper.

CHAPTER IV.

The Community in the Grosse Rue.

1609—1612.

WE must now endeavour to gain some idea of the life and practices of the incipient community at St. Omer, and to see whether in these its members in any degree fell short of the high aspirations with which they had started from England. And here assistance will be obtained from Father Lohner's history, who must himself have obtained his information, not only from all the existing documents, but also by word of mouth, either from Mary Poyntz herself, who lived for some years at Augsburg and Munich before her death in 1667, or from the nuns who were living with her. He tells us then :¹

That "their course of life was the epitome or model of the choicest virtues and perfections." For their daily routine, "every hour was regularly divided, and each appointed to certain employments and not a moment of time was wasted. All was turned as far as possible to the honour and service of God. She and her companions took food but once a day, lying only upon straw beds, and undertook penances and mortifications besides. They never allowed a Sunday or holiday to pass by without hearing the

¹ *Gottseliges Leben*, pp. 63, 64.

Word of God, whereby they not only had the opportunity to procure consolation and profit for themselves, but also, by their devotion and modest demeanour, encouraged others to a like modesty and reverence."

Upon their interior graces and virtues Father Lohner bestows the highest commendation, saying :

Their dwelling appeared much rather to be the dwelling of virtues than of man. A continual self-renunciation, a humble knowledge and acknowledgment of their own faults, simple obedience and subjection of their own will and understanding, fervent devotion, both by meditation and vocal prayer, interior recollection and love of silence, exterior modesty of speech and demeanour, were to be seen there. All these and many other virtues shone forth so clearly in all their practices, that those who did not know them before might think that they had entered the religious state many years previously, and that it was after their protracted exercise that they had reached to so eminent a degree.

He adds that, "the Holy Spirit of God entirely possessed the house as His own, and richly endowed it with heavenly love."

This holy way of life had two distinct objects, which, in arranging its details and directing its progress day by day, Mary kept continually before her. These were, in general terms, her own perfection and good of her neighbour within the limits of her sex. In her knowledge and love of the latter object Mary had made rapid advances since her eyes had been first opened to it for some time before she left the Poor Clares, six or eight months previously. Her life in England witnesses to her being already more

than a proficient in both. It had given her too a large experience as to what women could do if they would. But there was now a great problem before her mind which had to be solved. How could such a life be consonant with that to which both she herself and those with her felt themselves called, and that which they had hitherto known only as belonging to cloistered religious? A state uniting both they knew had of late years been approved by the Church for men, and had already brought forth fruit so noble, that its departed members were even then likely to be enrolled among her saints. But was a state of a similar kind possible for feeble women, who, it had always been supposed, needed the guarded and perpetual shelter of four walls to carry out in its fulness the sacrifice of their life to God, with the one object of their own perfection? A host of apparent obstacles must have risen up before her, but Mary was not one accustomed to pause and spend time in thinking or talking over difficulties. There was, however, an addition, or rather what was in truth the foundation to the whole problem, which cost her far more. Was such a state the will of God for women, and beyond this, for herself and her companions in particular? Or in what other state was it His will that they should seek to glorify Him?

It is easy to understand how great must have been Mary's mental sufferings, from the absence of any knowledge on these points. Such sufferings were, in fact, but an advanced stage of those which had already pressed heavily, with few intervals, upon her ever since she first set foot in St. Omer, and they

were heightened now to a great extent by the knowledge that so many other vocations hung upon her decision. "Though thus far advanced, she remained nevertheless in great anxiety and anguish of mind, not knowing the precise will of God concerning the state of life she was to settle in, but this did not hinder her from going as far as she had light and conform to what it led into, the end she had in view." She was asking, she knew, no light matter of Almighty God, and far more than even the vocations of the few souls now in her company; her desires extended to the good of thousands, should He grant them, and she sought an answer from Him therefore neither by half measures nor by occasional spasmodic acts of piety. "To this end, she and hers, for the first seven years," adopted the severe rule as to food and sleep already given in Father Lohner's words, that is, they "ate but one meal a day, lay on straw beds only, with diverse other great austerities, which she most prudently would tell hers were not done as to be a settled observance, but as a means to obtain light and knowledge."

To these practices of mortification were at once added active works for the souls of others, as far as lay in their power. The Annual Letter from St. Omer's College for 1610, speaks of them thus: "There are in this city certain virgins, ladies of high rank and education, who heart and soul embrace every opportunity of doing good works required of them at home and abroad. They are assisted spiritually by our Fathers." The good works here mentioned were chiefly the education of children, and in a way little

yet practised except for boys, that is, they took into their house those sent from a distance, and besides had a day-school for the young girls of the town, and this without any remuneration.

Amongst other goods, which they did to the public, a chief one, and one of the most useful to their neighbours, was to employ themselves in the education of youth, not only those of our nation (of which there were very many), but also those of the places where they lived, who were taught gratis the sciences fitting our sex, all that became good Christians and worthy women. The English, in regard of the distance, lived wholly under their care, tabled, &c., and were taught qualities to render them capable and fit to do God service in whatsoever state, religious or secular, and through God's mercies the effects have very happily followed in all our English monasteries and diverse in married state.

It is evident from the immediate adoption of this regular rule of life, with its allotted hours and active employments, that Mary must have discussed and arranged it in outline with her companions, and those competent to advise her, before they left England. She had also probably already promised to receive the children of Catholic friends anxious to place them out of danger of the growing evil at home, for from Winefrid Wigmore's words just quoted it appears that a numerous set of English boarders soon filled the house. It was with this view that Mary had selected the dwelling for herself and her companions. It was situated in the principal street of St. Omer, La Grosse Rue, as it was then called, since changed into Rue Royale, and again altered more than once at and since the Great Revolution, to remain finally

what it is now, Rue des Commandants, from the residence of the ancient Governors of the town being in it.

To Mary's companions the pious atmosphere of St. Omer in those days must have been a heaven on earth. How they must have rejoiced to hear the air full of the chimes from the numerous churches, mediæval convents and monasteries, which met the eye at almost every turn, and formed the ornament of each narrow street, to which they generally gave their names, and to know that the Holy Sacrifice was being offered on all sides around them! The beautiful cathedral, near at hand, could boast of the presence of a bishop resident amidst his flock, and vied in the piety of its clergy with its rival in grandeur at the opposite end of the town. This was the magnificent Abbey of St. Bertin, then a specimen of early pointed Gothic architecture, perfect in all its parts, with a flourishing community of monks, not as now a shattered relic of the past, whose lofty tower, left standing alone, enables the passers-by to picture to himself what the glory of the whole must have been in former years. And besides churches, convents, and monasteries, St. Omer was a place of pilgrimage, and not only did joyous religious processions issue forth into the streets, of clergy and monks of the town, but streams of pilgrims came from a distance with hymns and prayers to invoke Notre Dame des Miracles,² at her shrine in the

² The old Gothic chapel in the market-place was burnt down in 1785, and the statue carried in solemn procession to the cathedral, where it still remains, and where the devout obtain great graces from Notre Dame des Miracles at the present time. It was solemnly crowned by command of Pius the Ninth in 1871.

market-place, at one end of Grosse Rue, which had been there, first as a wooden oratory, and afterwards as a handsome two-storied Gothic chapel, ever since the days, it is said, of St. Omer himself. Often and often must Mary and her friends have trodden the few steps which led there, and poured out their anxieties and doubts and the wrongs of Catholic England to the ear and heart of her who is ever ready to hear and console. What a joyful contrast must all this have been to the desolate land they had left, with its closed and ruined churches, and altars desecrated by the Protestant Elizabethan service in those still allowed to stand; Holy Mass said here and there in secret only in a few private houses and at peril of death, every outward symbol of Catholicity, may we not almost say of Christianity, reviled and condemned to destruction and oblivion! What a feeling of happy joyous liberty must have been theirs, but for the thought of those they had left in lack of all consolation behind them!

The house which Mary bought in the Grosse Rue had belonged to a nobleman named Le Sieur de Licques, whose name was evidently well known to the *bourgeois* Jean Hendrico, a citizen of the town, who gives this information in a manuscript history³ or calendar of events which happened during his lifetime in St. Omer, in the early part of the seventeenth century, and which he noted down yearly as they occurred. Hardly was the new household settled in this man-

³ *Recueil Historique* de Jean Hendrico, Bourgeois de St. Omer, in manuscript, in three folio volumes, preserved in the public library of that town.

sion, their internal arrangements made, and exterior occupations assigned them, than their numbers rapidly increased. Father Lohner says⁴ that "they carried out their design with such assiduity and fervour, that in a short time many other ladies of good birth and position, incited by their edifying way of life, earnestly desired to be received into their company, to Mary's no little joy and consolation." Winefrid, modestly keeping herself and her companions in the background, gives to Mary all the merit of these fresh accessions to their household, and says, "Her example and form of her living and the fame of her holy life drew many others, and those of the best sort and most qualified."

If these reports of the exemplary life of "the English Ladies," as they soon began to be called, spread across to England, much more were they prevalent in St. Omer itself. Their charity and devotion in teaching gratis the children of the town, a thing unheard of before, their pious attendance at church with their flock of boarders, their own grave and retired lives and dress, and yet their easiness of access, and the winning kindness of their manners to those who sought them out and required their help, soon became known and spoken of from mouth to mouth. These were outward matters. Their interior life of prayer, obedience, and austerity was also whispered abroad with admiration and wonder, as the source whence such good exterior fruits proceeded. Jean Hendrico appears at first to have been rather puzzled by all the reports he heard, and to have con-

⁴ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 61.

fused them with some devout ladies of St. Omer, who, under the protecting guidance of Bishop Blaise, were also beginning to form a religious guild or community devoted to good works, calling themselves Daughters of St. Agnes.⁵ Under the date 1611, with the heading, "Filles dévotes:" he writes, "En sorte qu'en cette saison il y avait bon nombre en notre ville vivant ensemble en quelque maison observant les Régles avec tant d'austérité comme si elles fussent Religieuses, ce qui faisaient de même plusieurs jeunes filles de cette ville." In 1612 he seems to have obtained further knowledge, and from him we learn how largely their number had increased. He writes thus:⁶

Dans cette ville de St. Omer, se retrouvent encore plusieurs maisons pieuses où se retirent filles dévotes pour servir Dieu, observant quelque règle et manière de vivre, obéissant à la principale de tous et y en a une ou deux d'icelles maisons que l'on nomme les filles de St. Agnes; et enseignent les fillettes à lire, écrire et coudre pour l'honneur de Dieu. Si a une des dites maisons qui est remplie de jeunes filles Anglaises, s'y retrouvent illet de trente à quarante les quelles vivent aussi sous quelque forme de vie monastique s'exerçant en toutes sortes d'austerité et macération de corps, combien qu'elles fussent des corps délicates et belles en perfection comme Anglaises. Parvis s'étant ainsi exercées la plus part se retirent en monastères signamment dans celui de Gravelinghe (Gravelines) qui est le plus part rempli de ces filles ici qui sont la plus part filles de

⁵ This religious guild is mentioned by Bishop Blaise in his commendatory letter of 1615, as having houses at Douai, Mons, Valenciennes and Brussels, besides at St. Omer.

⁶ *Recueil Historique*, vol. ii. p. 350.

nobles et riches maisons, et ont pour leur demeure en cette ville qu'ils ont acceptées, la maison du Sieur de Licques dans la Grosse Rue.

The indication in this account of the growing numbers of the new community and the advancing solidity of their project is further illustrated by a correspondence existing in the Brussels Archives⁷ We cannot doubt that in settling herself in the dominions of the good Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, Mary Ward had already had some private communication with one who was so ready a patroness of every religious work, and to whose notice she had before been introduced concerning the Gravelines foundation. The following memorial is of a more public nature. The original is in Spanish, and is endorsed, "To her Most Serene Highness, from the English Ladies of St. Omer," and is dated in the margin Sept. 8. Within it are the drafts of two letters on the Archduchess's part, both of them to the Bishop and Magistrates, dated September and October, 1612. The memorial is as follows :

Most Serene Lady,—Barbara Babthorpe, Anne Gage and Mary Ward declare that, seeing the necessities of the Catholics of England, and the difficulty they lie under of bringing up their children in the Catholic Faith, which cannot be done in that kingdom without great risk to the children and parents ; and desiring to offer themselves to the service of God, for the education and instruction of such children as Catholics may wish to send to live in these States, they have settled themselves with other young English ladies in the town of St. Omer, where they have

⁷ From *Papiers d'Etat et de l'Audience* at Brussels. Liasse, 466.

already received two nieces of the Earl of Shrewsbury and another young lady of the family of the Earl of Southampton, and they understand that many Catholic nobles intend to send their daughters to the said town to be brought up as Catholics under the care of the said ladies, in the Faith and good manners, in order that they may either be Religious in these parts, or, returning to marry in England, may there maintain what here they have learned. For this cause they humbly beg your Highness to send a letter in their favour to the Bishop and another to the Magistrates of St. Omer, that they may favour them and allow them to live in peace and without molestation, under the protection of your Most Serene Highness, in the city, which grant they would consider a very special favour.

We may note here Mary's modesty and humility in placing herself last, after her two friends. Anne Gage, whose name will be of frequent occurrence, was probably a daughter of Edward Gage of Bentley, who assisted Mary in her first enterprise of the Gravelines convent, and who had recently built its church. He seems to have had a daughter professed there, and another at the Benedictines at Brussels. His name, as well as that of Sir Ralph Babthorpe, recently arrived in the Low Countries, would be well known to the Archdukes as those of faithful English Catholics of consideration, driven by persecution to live in their dominions, and this was one of the reasons why, doubtless, Mary heads her memorial with the names of their daughters. The Talbots whom she names as boarders were connected with herself, and Lord Southampton was an uncle of Jane Browne. The memorial itself is the first public document in which Mary speaks openly of her plans,

and it may be observed that it was not written until after the occurrence which has to be narrated in the next chapter.

Besides writing to the magistrates and Bishop herself, at Isabella's desire another document^a was also penned in French, either from Albert himself, or some person high in authority, to Bishop Blaise from Marimont, the Archducal country palace in the neighbourhood of Brussels, showing that Mary's object in writing the petition must have been named privately to the sovereigns beforehand.

In this letter which is dated October 1, 1612, the writer mentions Isabella's previous communication to the magistrates regarding "certain English ladies who have taken refuge in the town," "who ought," he says, to have received "all possible assistance from them." Isabella had requested the writer through Father Colasso, S.J., to write to the Bishop soliciting him "to represent to the magistrates, not only that the town will not receive any inconvenience, but rather renown, from being a place of refuge, and a secure asylum to a band of honourable ladies, who are banished from their country for their religion. And in conformity with this, they are required to be so good as to provide the said ladies (with their money) with a house near the one in which they now live, in which they live very inconveniently."

The inconvenience of their dwelling here spoken of must have arisen from the large influx of inmates since Mary bought it, and which was far beyond even

^a See Note I.

her expectation, necessitating another house near it to enlarge their quarters, and this she seems privately to have named to the Archduchess. The command which was in consequence laid upon the town, was one among the favours not at all uncommonly granted by the sovereigns to other religious bodies. Bishop Blaise mentions in his Pastoral already quoted the good results of the recommendations of the Archduchess. He also names another high in authority, who had written previously in their favour, the Papal Nuncio, the Archbishop of Rhodes. This prelate evinced great kindness towards the young community, and Bishop Blaise tells us that at his own request, the Archbishop gave them Holy Communion, apparently in the chapel of their house.

CHAPTER V.

Light at last.

1611—1612.

WE must now go back for a few months or more from the date of the letters quoted in the last chapter. "The English Ladies" had been two years at St. Omer. Their course hitherto had been undisturbed and most peaceable as to all exterior matters except in one respect—that their friends and well-wishers, not having been led in the same way in which they had been led, could not understand their apparent contentment in lingering on in their present mode of life, and were continually suggesting the necessity of entering some religious order. The refusal of these offers brought down upon them accusations of temerity, presumption, and much more. Mary describes the trouble this brought upon them in the following words in her letter to the Nuncio already quoted.¹ "Great instance was made by divers spiritual and learned men that we would take upon us some rule already confirmed. Several rules were procured by our friends both from Italy and France, and we earnestly urged to make choice of some of them. They seemed not that which God would have done,

¹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

and the refusal of them caused much persecutions, and the more because I denied all, and could not say what in particular I desired or found myself called to." These spiritual and learned men were doubtless Bishop Blaise and the Abbot of St. Bertin's, with various Fathers of the Society of Jesus. Of these and of the advice which they afterwards offered, we shall hear further in subsequent chapters. Their importunities did not, however, destroy Mary's peace and equanimity, much as she inwardly felt them, and was even at that very time suffering anguish of soul for this very uncertainty. But outwardly these sufferings, as an eye-witness tells us, were "so borne by her as never perceived by a dejected or troubled countenance, or doing any action in a divided manner." She met them with calmness and firmness. Almighty God had brought her and her companions where they were by a very visible guidance; to Him she looked, and not to the clamours and disapprobation of men, to maintain her cause and to direct their course elsewhere, if so it was to be.

But now a trouble arose, which, though at first sight it seemed comparatively light and easy to meet, threatened her companions at its close with little less than the shipwreck of their whole project. So at least it appeared in the eyes of most of the pious household. An epidemic, the measles, was prevalent in St. Omer, in 1611, and Mary's flock of children did not escape. She was the last to spare herself on such an occasion, and in nursing them caught it finally, and sickened with a severe attack. To an adult it was a dangerous disease, and before long she was

given over, and received the last sacraments. The grief and consternation of the whole community may be imagined. Their Mother, the light of their eyes, their guide, the pilot of the newly launched vessel, who was to have steered it past many a hidden rock and quicksand, which they well imagined were before them—what was there in prospect but utter ruin, if she were taken away? What could they do? There was but one, though that an omnipotent remedy in such a state of things—prayer. Right well, no doubt, they prayed, and the answer came. The good thought was given to one of them, perhaps to Mary herself, to offer a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Sichein, if she would obtain for them their petition.

This pilgrimage of Our Lady of Sichein, or, as it is now better known, Our Lady of Montaigu, had been already for two or three hundred years, as it still remains in these days, very dear to the devout inhabitants of the Low Countries. The miraculous statue had been originally found on an oak tree, which, growing in the form of a rude cross, had been availingly used as a place of prayer for the sick who obtained relief under its shelter from their pains and evils. Albert and Isabella had already built a stone chapel there in place of the old wooden oratory which had protected the statue, and just at this time Sichein was attracting greater crowds even than ever, for the Archdukes, in gratitude for the many favours² they

² It cost 300,000 gold crowns, and was twelve years in building. "Isabella," we are told, "endowed it with a profusion of statues, of marbles, of pictures, of tapestries, of lamps, of chalices, of a thousand ornaments." Though these costly treasures disappeared during the period of the Great Revolution, the rich vestments she worked and the

obtained there, had begun to build a magnificent church, as it was then considered, in the Renaissance style, which was itself to form the shrine, and of which the first stone was laid in 1609. Abundant miracles and graces were then obtained by the pilgrims to Our Lady of Sichem, nor are they less numerous at the present day. Among the frequent worshippers there at the time of which we write are to be numbered the holy youth, Blessed John Berchmans, whose favourite place of devotion it was in his early years, and the Archdukes themselves, who, in the language of Trumbull the English Ambassador at Brussels, went every year "to worship their idol" at Montaigu.

The offer of Mary Ward's companions was much greater than at first sight appears, for to go on foot across Flanders and Brabant, from St. Omer to Montaigu, some fifteen miles beyond Louvain, in the state of the roads of two centuries ago, infested too as they were by freebooters and disbanded soldiery, and with country inns of a scarcely habitable condition, was not an agreeable task for English ladies to perform. That our Lady justly appreciated the sacrifice is manifest from the immediate success with which the promise was attended. Mary Ward recovered, to the

robes for the statue are still in use at the shrine. On occasion of the sieges of Bois le Duc and Ostend, the Archdukes went twice on pilgrimage there in 1604. The former was raised in answer to their prayers, and when the latter was ended, Isabella walked several miles barefoot on the bad stony road to Sichem, in thanksgiving for the relief of the city. To the taste of the Archdukes has been attributed the custom, introduced in their time, of clothing all statues of our Lady in costly decorated robes, which has continued ever since.

very great joy of her companions. Almighty God was preparing her, by means of the past pressing distress, for a lasting and effectual grace, though, as great graces and favours often do, it brought with it its attendant and peculiar sufferings. This grace, as it forms the subject of the twenty-fourth picture of the series in the Painted Life, shall first be mentioned in the words which are there inscribed. "As Mary, a little recovering from a mortal illness lay in her bed at St. Omer, quite alone and in an extraordinary peace, she perceived quite plainly by an interior intellectual voice in what way she was to organize the Institute, which brought her so great a light, as also consolation and strength, that it was impossible to doubt that it proceeded from the Divine Verity which cannot deceive."

There is great reason to believe that the original of this picture was painted under the direction of Mary Ward herself, who desired to perpetuate among her companions and children the remembrance of the origin of their religious state of life, and to give the honour where it was due, to the teaching of Almighty God, Who suggested it, and not to anything in herself. Mary Cramlington speaks of Mary's having had the scene painted as a well-known fact, and says distinctly that she "writes of it with her own hand in her life, as also had it represented in painting." It may be that this is the picture of which we find the following words in a letter of Mary Ward's to Germany, written twenty-one years afterwards, during a time of great adversity, in 1633. She was anxious for its safety, and some other having been painted and sent to her by her desire, she says: "The picture is very well,

but keep well the great one; times are different from what they have been and will be," suggesting, perhaps, that the day might still come when its testimony would be of value.

The German inscription is almost a copy of the sentence in which Winefrid Wigmore gives the account of what took place on this occasion. It was not necessary for her to enter into the particulars more minutely, since her companions had them well engraved on their memories, and had not failed to keep the record of them in Mary's own words among their documents.

The manner by which God Almighty made known to her His blessed will concerning the Institute and state of life in which she was to serve and glorify Him was: Retired within herself, with extraordinary peace of mind, she understood intellectually but distinctly in precise words what Institute she was to take, and this knowledge was given her with such alacrity, light, consolation, and vigour, that she remained without power to will, or will other than that which was then given her to understand that God willed, so as her usual expression of this knowledge was, "All is as done with me, it only remains that I be faithful on my part."

Winefrid, as we have already seen concerning other facts, is not correct in her chronology in this account. Confusing the circumstances of a second illness which Mary Ward had three years afterwards with those of the present one, which they closely resembled, she places the scene she has described as happening at that time, saying, "Which grace God did her in the year 1614, being convalescent of a dangerous and

mortal sickness, of which, to say truly, she never recovered." We have Mary Ward's own authority, however, for the date, which she gives herself, thus fixing it beyond a doubt as 1611.

Her letter to the Nuncio Albergati is again the medium through which we obtain, in her own words, the history of what passed in an occurrence so fraught with important results to herself and her companions, and, as we may well add, to souls yet unnumbered. She continues from the last sentence quoted of this letter in the present chapter :

About that time, in the year 1611, I fell sick in great extremity, being somewhat recovered (by a vow made to send in pilgrimage to our Blessed Lady of Sichem), being alone, in some extraordinary repose of mind, I heard distinctly, not by sound of voice, but intellectually understood, these words, "*Take the same of the Society.*"³ So understood as that we were to take the same both in matter and manner, that only excepted which God by diversity of sex hath prohibited. These few words gave so great measure of light in that particular Institute, comfort, and strength, and changed so the whole soul, as that impossible for me to doubt but that they came from Him, Whose words are works.

Mary adds a little more to this account in a letter which she wrote to Father Gerard in the year 1619, which will be given in full in the course of a few chapters in connection with the circumstances which called it forth. She there says :

What I had from God touching this, was as follows (understood as it is writ, without adding or altering one

³ The italics are Mary Ward's.

syllable), "Take the same of the Society. Father General will never permit it. Go to him." These are the words whose worth cannot be valued, nor the good they contain too dearly bought; these gave sight where there was none, made known what God would have done, gave strength to suffer, what since hath happened, assurance of what is wished for in time to come."⁴

The relief of soul which Mary experienced from so plain a solution to her difficulties must have been a "spring of water to a thirsty land." "This grace of knowing God's will," says Winefrid, "was so great as may be in part conjectured by the expression she made of the sufferance the want thereof had caused her." Eighteen years afterwards she said, when pleading her own cause, "that all her sicknesses, persecutions, and other labours were as nothing in comparison of what she passed and suffered for ten years to know the will of God." But the shadow was not long in falling again, black and deep, after the bright gleam which had brought such repose along with it. Father Lohner, after quoting Mary's words above, at once proceeds to say: "From which words we may see how carefully and wisely she began this work, and carried it on, and that it was not so much wrought by her as by Almighty God. But as it is an old custom of the wicked enemy to hinder that work with all his might which he discerns to be above all others fitting to advance the great honour of God and the salvation of our neighbour, and so attempts to stir up all sorts of adversaries, therefore he acted

⁴ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

after this manner with regard to this important and excellent work, for various persons set themselves from the first against her plans."⁶

CHAPTER VI.

Choice of Rule.

1612—1613.

No place could perhaps have been better suited for the head-quarters of the English Ladies and the development of their plan than St. Omer. The affairs of England were well known there. The English Seminary was, at the time we are considering, full of young students smuggled over by their parents from across the water, in spite of the prohibitory laws and their penalties. The town contained, besides, a considerable number of English families in voluntary exile, who resided in it for the sake of the education of their sons by the Jesuit Fathers, and who frequented the church of the Seminary. The rest of the population took a vivid interest in such of the College proceedings as were publicly known,¹ the religious functions, the public examinations of the scholars, and other matters. By these means, and through the constant intercourse which necessarily took place between the two countries, the sympathies of the town were fully enlisted

⁶ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 67.

¹ *Recueil Historique*, MS. of Jean Hendrico, Bourgeois of St. Omer.

on the side of the Catholics of England and their oppressed condition, and the English Ladies had their full share in these feelings. Their first and greatest difficulty arose from no narrow-heartedness on the part of foreigners. It sprung from a quarter whence Mary Ward must indeed in some measure have expected it, from the very words which had otherwise wholly relieved her anxieties for the future.

The spiritual needs of her household had been provided for from their first coming over by the Fathers from the English Seminary. Bishop Blaise also, through the personal esteem he entertained towards Mary, was a warm friend and watched over their interests with fatherly care. He allowed them a chapel in their house, and writes² thus of the arrangements made for them by his sanction, for plainly Mary consulted him with regard to all public matters:

It is also to be borne in mind, that for the most part, they usually confessed to Rev. F. Roger Lee, a true Jesuit, filled with the Spirit of God, who as far as the Institute would allow him (and no further, as we are able to attest), ministered to them from the beginning with the warm approval of good men. Nor do these ladies demand at the hands of the Fathers of the Society aught but the services these render to the rest of the faithful; they go to the Church of the English Jesuits for confession, communion, and sermons, they apply to them for exhortations, direction, and the ministry of the sacraments, and no more. We have appoin-

² In the certified duplicate of Bishop Blaise's recommendatory letter in manuscript, in the Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome. (*Anglia Hist.* 1590—1615.)

ted a priest of established reputation whose duty it is to administer to them the last sacraments when occasion requires, and who, together with a respectable layman, overlooks their temporal business.

Yet, notwithstanding these privileges, and the universal esteem and favour shown towards the community, their desire to adopt the Rule of St. Ignatius, when it was originally broached, met with nothing like approval on any side. With regard to Father Roger Lee it is manifest that he had encouraged Mary in the results arising from her stay in England, the organization of the growing community, and the work which they took in hand, for Mary, being under a vow of obedience, could not have acted in taking so decided a line without consulting him. It may also be gathered that he was not among the number of those who hitherto had importuned her to embrace some order already established in the Church. We hear no more of the vow she had made to enter the Teresian Order if he desired it, and Father Lee must have known, equally with herself, the unsuitability of other offers made to her for carrying out the designs which were gradually opening out, and which she must have laid before him. Yet for some time after the occurrence related in the last chapter, we hear of nothing but a decided opposition on his part to accept the conclusions which Mary herself had drawn from it, as to the course which she and her companions were thenceforward to pursue. We learn, indeed, beyond this that, Mary having as with former similar graces, at once submitted it to his judgment, he had

desired her to dismiss the matter from her thoughts, and make no use of it in the formation and perfection of her plans.

The vow of obedience which she (Mary) made to her confessor at her coming out of the English Poor Clares was so inviolably and reverently kept by her, that she submitted whatsoever supernatural light or grace, and this without dispute, when first she had declared sincerely how she understood the matter. For she well knew God could not be against Himself, and that it was no abuse to His grace, which she received but to use for His service for the glory of the Giver, to leave for His will. After so many years of penance and anxiety to know God's will, when known with such assurance and clarity, as never more to doubt in herself, in such a manner as she would oft tell us, and even to her last days, that "all was to her as already done," and that "as oft as she opened her eyes, she did as it were sensibly, visibly see it;"—notwithstanding all this, her confessor commanding her to lay aside both her thoughts and her Institute, which she did without delay.

How long this state of things lasted we are not informed. The household and the scholars continued to increase, and with them the pressure of Mary's outward cares. The latter were certainly not alleviated by Father Lee's opposition, which, but for the protection of God's interior guidance and the strong faith and confidence in Him which He bestowed upon her, would have gone far to destroy the repose of soul which this last favour had brought with it.

But what [continues the manuscript] must be the force of this magnanimous servant of God, that with the

burthen of an unsettled mind and uncertainty of God's will, could attend to so many other occasions which were performed with so divine an exactness; whole in her petitions, and whole and without reserve in her resignation, whole employing all the strength she had in her labours, whole to herself, and whole to her neighbour, great in her faith and her confidence in God, and faithful in her search to know all that God would of and by her.

The reasons which induced Father Lee to think differently are not distinctly given, but may be easily gathered. Father Dominic Bissel indeed says that "he carefully considered all that Mary had hitherto done, and being suddenly enlightened by heavenly light, he used all his efforts to maintain the Institute." If this were so, he did not communicate it openly, Mary, and those with her, only saw a gradual change in him. "He continued to confess her, to whom she had made her first and only vow of obedience; the singular graces he, this good religious, could not but see that God did continue to her, and her correspondence, so as he had not what to contradict nor leave to see she was in a special manner guided by God Almighty, which, though a privilege so great, hath oft consequences of great sufferance, as here happened to His dear servant." This suffering arose in some measure from the fact, that, acting by direction of his superiors, Father Lee did not wholly alter his line of conduct, even when he had learned to believe that God's hand was manifest in what had taken place. Mary's obedience, therefore, was still severely tried.

She being tied to the confessor by vow, assured in effect that God could not be against Himself, made no difficulty

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to obey, submitted without reply to what he commanded, though wholly contrary to what she found interiorly God would with her, and though she knew very well that the contradictions and oppositions her confessor brought forward were forced, and that he acted thus contrary to his own light and judgment, and what he did was of force. And this she did in so eminent a manner, even after she had a knowledge, to her undoubted, what Institute God would she should embrace and practise.

And in another place we read :

In many of these occasions she saw full well her confessor's commands came with force and contrary to his own judgment oftentimes, yet she made not therefore any difference or difficulty in depriving herself by his command of all her ideas and of her Institute.

Nor did the opposition arise solely from Father Lee's superiors. By degrees the matter came to be discussed by many, and when Mary, in giving the account of it to the Nuncio Albergati, says, "My confessor resisted," she adds, "all the Society opposed." The number therefore of those who discouraged her in her views was only increased by this last grace which God had given her, especially among those whose opinion she valued.

Yet did it not exempt her from great and sensible proofs, as above said, her confessor's contradiction in himself and of her, and that certain religious men, by her dearly loved and respected, disliked, and to a strange degree made violent opposition to what to her was so dear, and on the other hand, the will of God being so dear to her, that after having at length known it, she could not endure the least mixture or change, as not to be changed or mingled to please or gain thousands of worlds ; nor could the neglect

of it be a less crime in her than the reproach she would have justly merited of unfaithful and treacherous and disloyal.

It appears from these words and from what Mary says further to the Nuncio, that she stood almost alone for a time in upholding her plan of taking the Rules of the Society of Jesus and adapting them for the use of women. For even Father Lee withheld his entire approbation, while allowing her and her companions to go on for the most part in their course. Meantime the importunities arose afresh that she should take a rule which had been tried and authorized in the Church. Already several rules had been "procured from Italy and France" and pressed upon them by their friends. These attempts were renewed upon Mary's declaring their desire to adopt those of St. Ignatius. She writes thus of what resulted in the letter to the Nuncio: "Divers Institutes were drawn by several persons, some of which were approved and greatly commended by the last Bishop Blasius of St. Omer, our great friend, and some other divines: these were offered us, there was no remedy, but refuse them, which caused infinite troubles."

In a paper drawn up by some unknown opposer of the English Ladies, about the year 1613 or 1614, the earliest of this nature which has yet come to light, and which is now among the St. Omer Papers in the State Archives at Brussels,³ it is said:

But afterwards when they themselves perceived that their numbers increased daily, they began to think of in-

³ Endorsed, *Puella Angla Audomari*.

roducing a certain new Institute of religious life, the only monastery of which is at Bordeaux, in France, which has rules and constitutions approved by our Holy Father, Paul the Fifth. And desiring to live under this rule, they for some time petitioned for its foundation in Belgium by the aforesaid Holy Father, but nevertheless they did not obtain it.

The writer then proceeds with certain charges against the English Ladies which will be considered in a future chapter. As to the Institute which he mentions, he seems to have been misinformed, for there is no evidence to show that Mary Ward and her companions ever had the desire to unite themselves to it, though it may be possible that their well-meaning friends went so far as to make the request for them which he indicates, in the hope they would accede to the plan. The rules of this Institute were probably pressed upon them for several obvious reasons.

The Company or Daughters of our Lady, which seems to be the Congregation in question, had as foundress a lady named Madame Lestonac, widow of the Marquis de Montferrant. She was assisted by Fathers de Bordes and Raimond, of the Society of Jesus, at Bordeaux, and in 1607, two or three years after the commencement, through the Cardinal Archbishop of the city obtained the approval of Paul V.⁴

⁴ In 1608, Paul V. aggregated the Company to the Benedictines, rather as a necessary condition of its existence, than as forming any part of that Order. Madame Lestonac died in 1640, aged 84. Her body remained incorrupt until the Revolution, when the Communists had it thrown into a ditch in the garden of the Commune. She was declared Venerable in 1824. There are now about fifty houses of this Congregation, the greater part in France, a few in Spain and Italy. Thirty of these were founded in Madame Lestonac's lifetime. (Migne, *Encyclop. Théol.*, vol. 23, pp. 951—70.)

The idea of adapting the Rule of St. Ignatius for the use of women, who should undertake the education of young girls, first suggested itself to the two Fathers named above, and fell in with the views of Madame Lestonac who was seeking to devote herself to such a work for the good of souls. She therefore adopted the Rule with certain alterations and modifications. The most important changes were, the addition of a vow of strict inclosure, and the absence of any supreme head to the Congregation, each house being independent, under the Bishop of the Diocese, and unconnected with the rest. These features doubtless at once determined Mary and those with her to reject the idea of affiliating themselves to the Institute.

Three other Rules may also be mentioned as likely to have been brought to Mary Ward's notice. The Ursulines were, at the time we are writing of, rapidly increasing in numbers and had flourishing congregations in Bordeaux and the large towns of France, as also in Italy. They were still uninclosed, and some not even living in community. In 1612, the House at Paris asked and obtained a Bull of inclosure from Paul V., and the example was followed by nearly all the others within a few years. To the Ursulines may be added the Order of Notre Dame⁵ just springing

⁵ Madlle. Le Clerc began, in 1601, under the direction of Père Fourrier, to teach the poor children of a village in Lorraine. Soon joined by other ladies, their work was approved by the Papal Legate, the Cardinal of Lorraine, in 1603, and extending themselves to Nancy and elsewhere, they obtained in 1615, the formal approbation of the Holy See for their Institute as an order, involving canonical inclosure. This Order of Notre Dame spread subsequently both in Belgium and Germany.

into existence in Lorraine under the direction of Père Fourrier, also then uninclosed, and lastly the Oblates⁶ of the Torre dei Specchi at Rome, an older community and one much in favour in that city, whose foundress, St. Frances of Rome, had lately been canonized in 1608.

Of all the rules offered to Mary, she says in general terms, "they seemed not that which God would have done." In other words, she had no attraction to them, nor had her companions; of what avail then to endeavour to thrust them upon a number of unwilling souls? They contained, doubtless, what was unsuitable to the purpose they had all of them at heart—work in and for England. Originating as they did in Italy and France, Mary, with her penetration and gift of leading and guiding others, found in these Congregations that which was foreign to the English character. But above all, she knew already of the first, what from the details she heard, she may beforehand have anticipated, as the final end of the second and third of these congregations—namely, Papal inclosure. Papal inclosure would have been a

⁶ This congregation had a mitigated form of the Benedictine rule, but was not cloistered. It was approved by Pope Eugenius the Fourth in 1433, the same year it was founded. Its members took no vows, but promised obedience to the Superior, "according to the received custom." They had pensions of their own, and each had two servants; they could leave the congregation to marry. It was founded by St. Frances for those who wished to lead a devout life, but who were not called to the severities and irrevocable engagements of inclosure. The Oblates had many charities, especially towards prisoners. There never was more than one community belonging to this congregation, for though the house was both holy and flourishing, it never sent out filiations (Helyot, *Ordres Monastiques*).—Migne, *Encyclop. Théol.*

bar to all her designs, especially for that part of them which regarded a freer and more enlarged plan of education for girls. By the law⁷ of the Church at that time, scholars became cloistered like the nuns for the period of their stay in the inclosed convents, and could not return there at all if they came even once out of inclosure, or enter another without a distinct permission from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Public day-schools taught by nuns were of course impossible. For the fourth which has been named, the Oblates, their object and way of life had little in common with that of Mary and her friends, for it was not because they did not love the solitude and irrevocability of the cloister, that the latter sought to be free from enforced inclosure. Neither would the liberty allowed to the Oblates have been sufficient for their requirements, amounting, as it did, to driving in carriages to their country-house and to visiting the churches, and having the power of receiving daily visits from secular women within the convent. We shall hear further of this Congregation at a later date.

Mary's lot then was, at this time, to use a common simile, to row against the stream. The voice of the multitude, tradition, and experience, were against her, but she was not daunted, and God gave her, as we have seen, unbounded trust in Him. Bishop Blaise seems to have been one of the first who were won over by her calm confidence and holy life. Winefrid says that her duties "were performed with so divine

⁷ *Die neuern religiösen Frauen-Genossenschaften*, Dr. B. Schels, pp. 41, 42.

an exactness that the blessed memory of Bishop Blasius, their Bishop there, would give no other rule to a congregation of virtuous ladies that lived in that town under his immediate direction, but the example of our dearest mother and hers."

The good prelate gives himself the account of his first entire approval of their plans in the letter quoted above, the original purport of which will be explained in a later chapter. His words show that Mary did not conceal from him the Divine source whence she had originally derived them. Having given the particulars concerning her Gravelines foundation, he adds :

Mrs. Mary Ward and her companions wishing to render to their country certain services which are more or less incompatible with the usual routine and strict inclosure of monastic rule, had resolved to devote themselves wholly to the teaching and education of girls whom their parents might send them from England. This determination of theirs had been further strengthened by their study of the Constitutions and Rules of the Society (of Jesus) in an English version, wherein they beheld a most perfect model of the life which, as far as befitted their sex, they had resolved to embrace.

Their members having increased, they drew up in writing their plan of life and their Institute, which, when it was translated into Latin we attentively examined, approved, and warmly commended in the Lord. We further exhorted them to profit by daily usage and experience in order to make such additions, alterations, and modifications therein as the Spirit of God might suggest. Mrs. Ward, their Mother and Superior, having obtained much light from on high, has done good service in the matter, yet without

publishing anything that had not been beforehand submitted to our approval, so that when time had matured the work it might at length be submitted to our Most Holy Lord for his approbation.

The plan of the Institute mentioned by Bishop Blaise as having been drawn up for his inspection by Mary Ward and her companions, is, if existing, among the numerous documents not yet brought to light. There is however one statement in ancient handwriting,⁸ the wording of which and other internal evidence lead to the belief that it was composed in the early days of their undertaking, when details were unadvisable, as still matters of trial only, and the general form of the Institute alone is therefore given. The paper is headed "A short declaration of those things which tend to the greater glory of God by this small Society which is being formed." It is a good Latin composition and is divided under various heads: "The remote occasion of the Institute being formed," "The motives and purpose," "Private perfection the first thing to be sought after," "Vocation and object," "Means to this end," "Rules," "Manner of regimen." If this outline is one among the statements originally laid before Bishop Blaise, it must have been followed by others more circumstantial. The matter it contains being expanded, and the necessary minor details added, in a far more important public document which will have to be discussed in a future chapter, further extracts are not here needful.

⁸ In the Nymphenburg Archives.

During the two years we have been considering, the community at St. Omer continued steadily to increase. Meantime Mary's health had been for the time shattered by the attack of measles in 1611, though the imminent danger to her life was removed by the vow to Our Lady of Sichem. It may be gathered that her companions were still under some dejection on her account, from a few words in an address which Father Lee made to them on New Year's Day, 1612, in which he endeavoured both to cheer them with regard to her, and to increase their trust in the designs of God towards themselves. "You see," he begins, "our Saviour this day offers His Precious Blood to be shed for us, therefore pull up your spirits in Almighty God, to go forwards with more vigour in your good purposes." Then at the close he adds: "We see, children, how your Superior is, yet not so but that she may yet live, but, howsoever, I would have you all to have enough confidence in God, that you assure yourselves, that those which He taketh from you, though they be never so good, yet He will give you as good again."

It was during this period of lingering illness, that, as we find from one of Father Lee's exhortations, Barbara Babthorpe was appointed Superior in order to assist Mary's recovery by lightening her duties. The following short address is the next entry in the book of manuscripts⁹ to that just quoted.

Now, children, you see that it is necessary for God's honour, that your Superior seek some means to get her

⁹ In the Nymphenburg Archives. They are headed, "Speeches of Rev. Father Lee's, made unto us all at several times."

health, and as she hath care of you all hitherto and hath given you all satisfaction, so now it is thought fit, to the end that her care may in some sort be lessened, that another be chosen your Superior amongst you. And as God Almighty hath chosen your Superior an instrument to begin your course, so she having her health again may also finish it, and as hitherto it hath been only love that hath holden you all together, and no other tie or obligation, being all of you young gentlewomen, and being, thanks be to God, as others are, and might have lived in the world, as others do, according to your degree, yet God Almighty hath called you out of it to Himself. Sister Barbara Babthorpe is to be Superior, and nevertheless to have a particular care over you in the noviceship.

Barbara Babthorpe was at this time not more than twenty years of age. But most of those who, in their limited number, were older than herself, and were also endowed with the necessary prudence, strength of character, and other graces, had already to be engaged in a work elsewhere, requiring the exercise of all the highest spiritual and natural gifts. Nevertheless, Mary Ward must have discerned in Barbara an unusual power of governing and guiding others to have risked the attempt at this juncture. She was to govern, however, under Mary's own eyes, and rather to be her assistant, as she was still there herself, and she knew and could trust Barbara to the very core, after their long intimacy of years. We may observe in this measure, that a further step was made towards giving shape to the Institute. The need had arisen from natural circumstances, but Mary in looking on to the future necessities arising out of her plans, had doubtless seen that the office of Chief Superior was

requisite to bring them to perfection. And in this simple common sense manner the office was introduced. We have seen that Barbara's name was therefore fittingly placed as Superior of the house at the head of the document sent to the Archdukes during this year. Mary also took other measures to give form and solidity to her work. With her energy of character, a time of failing health and languor was certain not to be a time of idleness. She perhaps made use of this opportunity definitely to arrange and put in order the different offices requisite for the fit government of a now large community engaged in the laborious, mental and bodily work which was to be the object of their state of life. Bishop Blaise, who seems to have had an eminently practical mind, writing within a year or two, answers certain objections made against the increase of their number by enumerating these offices.

What wonder if in the beginning of their community they have not been able to supply other convents with subjects? In the first place they needed persons sufficient in number to form a community, they required a Superior, her Vicar, a Procurator, mistresses to train and instruct their pupils in letters, in the genteel accomplishments of embroidery, singing, music, &c. They wanted a person to superintend household matters, a dispenser, a door-keeper, a sacristane for the chapel, a gardener, a prefect of health, an infirmarian, besides those required for the several household offices of baking, brewing, cooking, tailoring, and mending for the laundry, and so on.

The care with which the several officers were chosen among her Sisters by Mary, and the forcible

words with which she commended their responsible posts to each, may be seen in the following words to the new Infirmarian, apparently the first who had been thus solemnly inducted.

Sister Elisabeth, it has been found good to place you over the sick, but I very earnestly desire that you should take care that they want for nothing, both for their spiritual profit as well as for their bodily comfort. And in truth I very particularly charge not only you, Sister Elisabeth, but all those who will follow in your place, that you all bear a great love towards the sick. And I think that I have nothing to fear on this account when I give them over to you. For Almighty God has put them for a time like prisoners into your hands and under your authority, in the same way as if they were really your prisoners, therefore you ought for the love of God to take great care of them. For St. Bernard says, let the chalice be sold if thou art in need for the sick, and blessed Father Ignatius would rather be deprived of all Church vestments than that the sick should suffer want. For this reason, I heartily enjoin it upon you. You must remain with them and carefully assist them: you must employ great assiduity not only when others see you, but also when no one sees you, for you certainly do not walk in the dark without a candle, as the saying is, for Almighty God, for Whose sake you do all, sees everything. Therefore be diligent and faithful, that Almighty God may say to you at the Judgment Day: "Well done, good and faithful handmaid, because thou hast been faithful in a little, I will set thee over much." But on the contrary, it will be said to whoever does not act rightly: "Take him away, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness;" which as I hope will not be done to you.

Mary was herself a striking example of what she thus impressively inculcated, and we shall find her tender love towards the sick beautifully illustrated by many interesting facts which will come before us.

There is no information as to the reasons which induced Mary within a few months only to apply a second time to the Archducal Court. For some cause she may have wished to obtain from the Sovereigns a direct expression of their favour towards her and her work. However this may be, Trumbull, the English Ambassador at Brussels, considered the matter of sufficient importance to mention it to James I. himself, and to send him a copy of the Archdukes' letter to Mary Ward. In one of his letters¹⁰ beginning, "Most excellent and most worthy Sovereign,—The Archduke is at Marimont, his weak body being furiously assailed by his incurable disease the gout;" he proceeds thus, after writing of other matters concerning the English Jesuits in Flanders: "By the copy of a letter written from these princes to the matron of certain brain-sick English gentlewomen at St. Omers called Expectatives (whereof I have the original minute in my lodging, paraphed and corrected by the hand of M. Grispere, the Vice-President of their Privy Council,), your Majesty may perceive what favour is borne to your evil affected subjects, and to what end they are fostered and cherished in these parts." The letter contains further business, and ends: "Your M. most humble and most obedient servant, W. Trumbull. Bruxelles, the 26th May, 1613. St. Vet." Within it was inclosed the following docu-

¹⁰ P.R.O., *Flanders Correspondence*, vol. anno 1613.

ment, endorsed, "Copie of a letter written by the Archdukes' Privy Counsell to the Mrs. of certaine English women at St. Omers."

Les Archiducs, &c. &c.

Chère et bien Aimée,—Nons avons volontiers entendu la pieuse intention que vous a porté, et vos compagnes à abandonner vos maisons, parents et commodités pour venir prendre résidence en notre ville de St. Omer où vous recipuez et enseignez nombre de jeunes filles de votre nation, pour après d' être bien instruites en ce qu'appartient à notre sainte foi Catholique Apostolique et Romaine, et façonnées en toute bonne mœurs, les renvoyer à leurs parens pour les marier, et nourrir leurs enfans en la crainte de Dieu, et notre sainte foi, si elles n'aiment plus se rendre Religieuses riere [behind] nos pays par de ça. Et ainsi pouvez vous attendre de nous, que nous aiderons et favoriserons cette votre vertueuse resolution aux occasions qui s'en pourront présenter. Priant Dieu de vous avoir, Chère et bien Aimée, en Sa Ste. Garde,

A Bruxelles le second de Mai 1613. G. Vt.

GRISPERE VIDET.

La superscription était, A la maitresse du nombre des Vierges Anglaises, &c. A St. Omer.

CHAPTER VII.

Father Roger Lee.

1614.

IT seems not unlikely that Mary Ward may have visited England more than once between the years 1609 and 1614. The antagonistic document in the Brussels Archives lately quoted, states that there were at the time it was written (1613 or 1614) six of her companions at work there, and her own words tend to show that she had accompanied them. The date, however, of their first residence and their occupations in their own country, will be discussed in a coming chapter. Meanwhile, one of Mary's conferences with her Sisters, preserved in manuscript, fixes the time of her third or fourth journey. Its heading is: "Our revered Superior spoke to us all on the 11th of April, 1614, a little before her departure from us."

In this address Mary tells her Sisters that she has a business before her which no one but herself can accomplish, that she will be away for two or three months, and meantime she places Anna Gage as Superior over them. This matter which no one could accomplish but herself may have been the removal of her mother and younger sisters, one of whom was

Elisabeth Ward, from England, to live at St. Omer with her. There are no details remaining on this matter, but failing these, it may be conjectured that her father, Marmaduke Ward's, death opened the way for this arrangement. If this were the case, Mary's presence, as the eldest of his children, would be requisite in England, her eldest brother being already dead. It is known but incidentally that her mother spent the last years of her life with her children at St. Omer, and that both Mary's parents died before the year 1619. Dates and facts are equally wanting in the history of her family. Barbara Ward, writing in the year just mentioned, says, speaking of others who had suffered much for the Catholic faith: "So likewise had her own parents, of whom we will speak hereafter more at large, their sufferings were many, lives very holy, and deaths happy." The promised addenda, on a subject which would have been so interesting to many at the present day, if ever written, have not come down to us.

The death of Mary's eldest brother becomes known only as an illustration of the great grace of conformity to the will of God, which she possessed. Winefrid says:

She began this practice while yet young, upon the death of her eldest brother, who was killed in duel (but so as to have the sacraments, and died Christian-like), and was to her the dearest of all her brothers and sisters, and most like and sympathizing with her. Yet had not this accident the least power as to make a breach in this union of her will with God's, or change the serenity of her mind or countenance. Hearing that her younger brother should

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say "he hoped to live to revenge his brother's death," though as asleep to the former, made it then appear how active she was to prevent the offence of God, found efficacy so to labour and without cease till she brought him over where he might be applied to his studies and learn to make use of his courage.

There is no date to either of these occurrences, but as Winefrid seems to have been an eye-witness of Mary Ward's outward composure and self-command, it may be concluded that they happened after the year 1609. Mary's younger brother George, who is probably here intended, studied at the Seminary of St. Omer, and entered the Society of Jesus in 1619, in which he had the *alias* of Ingleby. He was for some time at Liège, and was for many years on the English Mission, so that Mary must frequently have had intercourse with him later in life. We shall also find that he was in England and in communication with her in the interval between his leaving the Seminary and becoming a Jesuit.

Mary could not long have returned from transacting this family business in England, when she was again attacked by the disease which had already so nearly proved fatal to her in 1611. This time its effects were more lasting, and so serious in their nature that it is stated "she never recovered" from them. This second illness, like the first, "had its beginning by visiting two of her little ones who had the measles, and brought her to the last extremes, so as to receive the holy oils. Neither was her recovery held human." The Annual Letter of St.

Omer's College for 1614¹ affords an explanation of the last words of this sentence, and also brings to notice another of the English Ladies, or English Virgins, as they were more frequently called, whose name will occur again on future occasions.

In the month of April an English lady named Vaux fell into a kind of insanity accompanied by a swelling of the whole body; she belonged to the consecrated English Virgins. She suffered great pain for some days and nights, and being brought to death's door, a particle of the winter cassock of our holy Father Blessed Ignatius being applied to her, she was healed. The same thing happened in the same house to another consecrated virgin of good family, named Mary Ward, in the month of September. She was also reduced to death's door by a lingering consumption, and had piously received all the last sacraments. At last they placed the reliquary containing the same particle of the cassock of the Blessed Ignatius upon her neck, and after a few days she had so far recovered her health beyond all expectation, as to be able to walk about the house and beyond it.

Mary Ward must have been ill for two or three months at least when thus wonderfully cured, but as on the former occasion her health was for the time broken. "Inclination was conceived with many probable signs of her present falling into consumption, and her weakness judged incapable of other remedies than her own native air, whereupon she went, and by the many happy following effects, it was not without a particular Divine disposition."

¹ Quoted from Arch. Brussels, *Collectio Carduelli*, vol. i. p. 232, in *Records S.J.*, by Henry Foley, S.J., series vii. p. 425.

Bishop Blaise again comes to our aid concerning the particulars of this fresh and unexpected journey. "It is only lately with our full knowledge," he writes, "that five of their number went to England. The first to go was Mrs. Ward, their Superior, who having received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, being upon the point of death, was ordered by her physicians to try her native air. She was accompanied by one of her community, who went to nurse her during her convalescence, and set out about Christmas." This was doubtless the faithful Winefrid, who describes like one who was an eye-witness, what took place during the coming eventful months. "The third was Mrs. Browne, summoned home by her father who was dying, and is since deceased. He was a knight and paternal uncle to Viscount Montague. The others went either to recover their patrimony or to collect the pensions of their pupils."

It could not have been without considerable anxiety that Mary left her increasing household at this time. Several of the older and therefore less experienced members were already in England, and those who had more lately come to her needed a continuance of the tender and clear-sighted guidance and education in religious life, which, as one of her especial gifts, had drawn them to her. Many criticising eyes, and those not always kind ones, were fixed upon them, so that besides their own spiritual growth, their words and actions where they came in contact with the exterior world, became necessarily the subject either of edification and the advancement of God's glory, or very much the contrary in the

hindrance which they caused to the good name and well being of the Institute.

To add to Mary's anxious thoughts, Father Lee, their holy and judicious confessor and director, was about to leave St. Omer. His health had long been failing, and his Superiors were sending him elsewhere as a means of restoration. A report had been spread by ill-wishers that this change was caused by the difference of opinion existing among the Fathers of the Society as to the merits of the rising Institute, some of them condemning Father Lee for approving and aiding it. Father Tanner, S.J., does not even mention the report in his account of Father Roger Lee, in his well known history,² and Father Henry More,³ Father Roger's contemporary in the Society, does so only to contradict it. We shall hear Father Lee's own remarks on the subject below.

However he may have been withheld as well by obedience as by a wise and holy prudence, from hastily expressing a full approval of the form adopted by Mary and her companions for their Institute, there is no doubt that from an early date his exhortations and influence assisted them greatly in abiding by their choice. He spoke to them from the fulness of personal experience, and by infusing into them his own spirit, he imparted to them the very spirit of the rule they desired to embrace. Nor was it long before he added a more direct approbation, as will be noticeable in the fragments which have been preserved of his addresses, by the hands

² *Vita et Mors Jesuitarum.*

³ *Historia Provincia Anglicana.*

of those to whom they were delivered. The little manuscript volume, which has been preserved of them, is evidently written by one who had heard them. They are not arranged in any sort of order. Some of them were given at the time of the principal feasts and holy seasons, as the Circumcision, Lent, Whitsuntide, &c., others at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, or before the renovation of vows, and others on special occasions. The frequent mention made in them of vexatious opposition and unkind criticism from outside, gives evidence of the trials to which the little company was exposed, like most originators of what is new and contrary to received maxims, especially if in itself good and holy. These trials will be entered upon in a future chapter. The address, of which the following notes, headed "An invitation to suffer," have been preserved, appears to have been drawn forth by one of these occasions.

You must seek in all things not only to be good in yourselves, but also to be fit for whatever place your Superior shall put you in ; and not to content yourselves with this, that with God's grace, you would not offend Him in anything for a world, nor to be with a certain scrupulous anxiety, but have great courage and confidence in God, and seek to be solid and grateful to God for giving you such a vocation. And prepare yourselves to undergo many difficulties ; never seek to fly from that which our Saviour so willingly embraced. For you know the Jews did sometimes say that He was a sinner, and that He had a devil in Him, therefore whatsoever reproaches or speeches shall happen to your state, by such as do not know you, assure yourselves there may, for as the thing is more excellent in

itself, so the more it is like to have of them that will be against it, and not only that are not good, but also spiritual persons. And therefore proceed with great fervour and courage, and be glad when such things happen, and never fly from the Cross which our Saviour carried before you. And for those things which you have in yourselves, think that by God's grace you may help others in the same, because you can have nothing but others may have the same, and as you have had helps and counsels to profit yourselves, so may you use the like to such as have need, and always have great zeal of souls, but with discretion, as never to speak anything before you see whether it may be for God's honour or no. Be grateful to God for what He hath given you, be solid and fit to endure whatsoever crosses shall come to you, and seek both to profit yourselves and all such as be under your charge.

In another address, which must have been delivered very shortly after Mary Ward's departure for England at the end of the year 1614, Father Lee gives an account of what passed with regard to the English ladies, at his farewell visit to Bishop Blaise. It also shows that in union with others he had himself already taken steps towards laying the Institute before the Holy See.

Children, though I do love all your company well, yet of some of you I have a particular knowledge of your spirits, therefore for your comforts I thought good to give you a little more light and knowledge of your state, and the reason of my going away, which is partly for the speeches and opinion of some, and as you know it is incident to our vocation to be disposed according to obedience, and to keep them in true humility, which is the conservation of all virtues. For sometimes we see the Rectors of

Colleges, when they have founded them, and set all things right, are taken away; this I tell you that you may see and know these things, and withal that you may not have doubts put into your heads, for perhaps there be some that will try your spirits, and will seek to know whether you have solidity in you or no. For your Superior, they know what she was, and all of you, therefore they held back, and would not meddle because they knew what your Superior would do. And for my part, I have ever dealt with my chief Superiors and principal persons of the Society, as Father Owen,⁴ Father Antony,⁵ the Fathers in Louvain, as Father G.,⁶ Father Rector of this College,⁷ and my Lord Bishop, suffice it, persons in all minds, and therefore they would have approved my doings, whether I took things in hand that were not likely to be brought to pass. And for other persons, it was not necessary that they should know your state, and it hath been indiscretion, for that hath been to put themselves into a kind of servitude under the opinion of all. Your

⁴ Then Rector of the English College, Rome, where he succeeded Father Parsons in 1610.

⁵ Father Antony Hoskins, made Vice-Prefect of the English Mission in Belgium in 1609, who afterwards held the same office in Spain, where he died in 1615.

⁶ Father Gerard, doubtless, whose opinion Father Roger Lee would so greatly respect, and who had been for some time in Louvain. We know of his residence there from the letter of W. Trumbull to James I., quoted above, who in it says: "Gerrard, the powder traitor (as I am credibly informed), is now among the English Jesuits at Louvain, and there walketh up and down the street in public as if he were the most innocent man in the world, giving it out that he hath leave from the Archdukes to remain in their dominions. Cresswell, another viper of that venomous brood is shortly expected here out of Spain. The conjunction of which two malevolent planets cannot (in my poor opinion) prognosticate any good towards your Majesty."

⁷ Father Giles Schondonck, third Rector of St. Omer's College, died 1617.

state standeth that Father Owen wrote to me that my Lord Bishop's authority might do much towards the confirmation of it, so near is it. And I being with my Lord Bishop to take my leave of his lordship, and to receive his benediction, and withal remembering your Superior very kindly to his lordship, and withal conferring with him further of you, and what you were come to and how you are settled, I told his lordship that you were very near forty or fifty persons, and that the business is now almost ripe, and he replied and said that was a great number, and said, "Now, Father, they are come to that which you have often wished."

I told him what Father Owen had said, and told him that as his lordship had shown himself to be a father to you, so I humbly besought him that he would please to do so still, and always to defend and keep you under his fatherly protection. And he gave me very kind words, and showed himself to take great liking to your state, saying, "Father, whatsoever I can do for them, they shall find me ready, and whensoever you do but let me know that you have need of me for anything, I will further you in what I can, because it will be the eternal good of your country."

And withal I told him that there were some of you to be bishopped (confirmed), entreating his lordship would please to appoint that his chaplain might take order that they might come some day; and he answered, his chaplain should not need to take order, for that he himself would come down and celebrate, and he would appoint the day himself, which I think will be some day in Christmas holidays.

Thus you see how principal persons do esteem and approve your course, and I tell you this to the end that you may proceed more solidly, and that whatsoever doth happen or may be said by such as have little knowledge of your state, let it never trouble you, for perhaps some doth think that your proceedings will not be solid when I am

gone, because they apprehend it where indeed there is no such matter. And so when I was away before, they said you proceeded with such fortitude you gained more credit and esteem than you have done all the time I have been with you. But then, indeed, your Superior was with you, therefore it was less, but if you now show yourselves solid, and cleave together in unity and true charity one with another, you will make them all confounded, and whether they will or no, make them confess and approve what you do to be of God, and you will gain love and esteem of all that do see your proceedings. Therefore I commend these three things, virtues, to you, in all your proceedings ; first, humility, not to prefer yourselves in your speeches ; second, prudence and resolution in answering, that your resolution may be grounded in prudent resolution, not to speak out fully in your resolution, because it giveth occasion to move more doubts and questions. Third, seek still to have confidence in God Almighty, and know for certain that God hath care of you, and that He will never call you to an estate but He will give you sufficiency to perform it, and still beware of pusillanimity, and do all your actions with love and not with fear (when it is done for fear of pain), and with love, when it is done purely for God. And sometimes God doth permit a soul to be in obscurity and darkness, and then the devil seeketh to trouble them with temptations, sometimes putting in their minds to seek their consolation in a secular state, or in their past vanities, which killeth the spirit. But if we seek to mortify them and say, "Your holy will be done," and never mind them, then we shall find the profit of them.

And so, when we have consolation given us, we must esteem it, as Elias did the cake which was given him when he was told that it must carry him forty days' journey ; so we, when we have consolations, we must think it must make us fit to undergo greater matters for God. And if there be

any here amongst you that have suffered in yourselves, I hope the worst is passed ; at least it will do them no hurt now, and let them know for certain, that whosoever doth suffer, God Almighty will reward them. And in tribulation He is always with them, for He Himself saith, *Cum ipso sum in tribulatione* ; and He is nearest to them many times when they are in affliction. And therefore, do but call upon Him, and He will ever help you ; and seek to place your heart in that it should be placed in, for our Saviour loveth them that love Him, and let us love Him because He first loved us.

And make great esteem of all that is given you by God, and esteem highly of the least thing belonging to religious observances, and seek still to go forward in virtue from one thing to another, avoiding still loss of time, and serve our Lord with confidence, and know that God Almighty doth require nothing of you but your heart. Therefore let us go forward like good children, and let us do all with love, and let your hands never be idle, but seek still to go forward in the progress of virtue.

Your Superior, I hope, will come again, ere it be long, but howsoever your business shall be set forwards, although she should never come ; and I hope you will assist, joining your endeavours with others' labours, and by cooperating with God Almighty His grace, that by your prayers you will not be wanting to assist by asking it of God Almighty.

This last sentence clearly refers to the confirmation of the Institute, which Father Lee was endeavouring to promote, and concerning which he was in correspondence with Father Owen at Rome. He again encourages them to perseverance and fervour before his departure, upon giving the community some pictures, when he says :

Children, the reason why I give every one of you a picture, is not that I would have you remember me, nor that I think you will be ungrateful, for I have no reason to think so, in that I know you are all grateful, though my deserts have been but little. But I give them to you to put you in mind of your first spirit, and that you may remember your first desires and practise what heretofore you have heard, and that you forget not those wholesome instructions and documents which you have had given you for those spiritual difficulties you have had, for infallibly whoever remembereth and practiseth them shall gain most in the progress of virtue.

After advice on other subjects, he adds :

I account you all very happy because you have so great means to profit yourselves. I do not make any comparisons between others, because I will avoid comparisons in all things, yet I say your means to perfection is as much as any. For as you have always the Society, who by experience are found, not only to govern and direct themselves in matters of spirit, but all other sorts of persons, and God Almighty, out of His bounty, love, and goodness, hath given them that, and hath ordained them for that end ; therefore I say, without you be your own hindrances, you want not means, and unless you go from your first fervour, every one is happy that Almighty God hath called them to this Company and Society. And this is my intention in giving you these pictures to put you in mind of this.

Father Lee's farewell words before leaving St. Omer for Brussels appear to have been the following, in which the same affectionate care to strengthen and encourage the "English Ladies," in their difficult path, are observable :

Well, children, I can say no more to you than I have done, only I commend this—that you love God above all things, and yourselves in Him, and next to the love of God, exact observance of religious discipline and true subordination one to another. Secondly, those words of the Apostle: “I say to you that you do not only love in word, but in deed.” Be solid in your proceedings, and as God Almighty doth do with you, as He hath done with all His servants, that is, as He hath given them occasions of trial, whether their love were constant, and they had solidity in them or no; so let your love appear by your works, and let your deeds show your love. And so God bless you all. I commend myself to all your prayers. Though I think it needless, for I know I shall have them in the chiefest degree, and mine shall not be wanting to you.

I say, that as long as you remain united together, it is impossible for your spirit to decay.

Penances should be joined with two things, mortification and alacrity; always doing them so as may be most mortification, and still with alacrity.

Well, children, this shall suffice, only I commend this to you, that you make your souls a garden for the Blessed Trinity to walk in, especially the Second Person, your Spouse, Christ Jesus, and on all occasions present them before the Blessed Trinity, and offer yourselves to Him, which Three Persons now and ever bless you.

CHAPTER VIII.

Good out of Evil.

1614, 1615.

BEFORE accompanying Mary Ward on her visit to England in 1614, it will be as well shortly to review the nature of the opposition raised against her and the other English Virgins in their holy work, and the charges laid against them. These had become sufficiently notorious to produce at length a Pastoral letter from Bishop Blaise written in their favour early in 1615, forming to later generations a valuable testimony respecting them. It had not been long doubtless after Mary and her companions came to St. Omer, before it became known that they did not intend to enter any of the established Orders in the Church. Subsequently, their continual and steady refusal of the Rules of the various Congregations offered them, made them an object of curiosity, and to some perhaps of suspicion and offence. Their blameless life and the perfection at which they aimed would only add to these prejudices, when once the ungenerous accusation was raised, that they called themselves religious and affected a degree of holiness superior to that practised by the ancient approved Orders. A further cause of prejudice was in some

instances added, also, where any knowledge had been gained of the desire of the English Virgins to adopt the Rules of St. Ignatius. Those who entertained jealousies of the success which attended the labours of the Society of Jesus, would not sympathise with the extension of these rules to the communities of women, who would henceforth labour among their own sex with a similar spirit. Thus the cry was originated, that the limits of that sex was overstepped, by their rejecting cloister and by teaching where they ought to be in silence.

Bishop Blaise well exposes the injustice of the whole of these charges. He had already done so in several private letters, and he begins his public letter by denying their truth from his own personal knowledge. After speaking of the "English Virgins" as "occupied in furthering their own salvation and perfection in educating such girls as are sent to them from England," he proceeds: "And whereas certain parties in ignorance of the real state of the case have spoken untruly of their Institute, we declare by these presents that from the time these Virgins first entered upon the course of life they have adopted, we have been fully informed of the state of affairs."

Having given an outline of the origin of the Institute, which has already been quoted, he briefly sketches its form and objects.

1. Their Institute begins by inculcating the most perfect self-abnegation, and lays the most solid foundations of the spiritual life. It next, by the taking of three essential vows, constitutes a solid condition of life.

2. It sets forth a well-conceived plan for the education

of girls, with a view to their training in godliness and the accomplishments befitting their sex, whether they be found hereafter suited to the religious life in any of the convents of their nation established here in Belgium or elsewhere, or whether they return home to govern their household in a godly and prudent way. Further, this Institute removes every obstacle in the way of salvation and provides those spiritual aids which ward off dangers and sweeten labour. Hence we have been not a little surprised to find that there are some who are never tired of inveighing against this way of life, which is beyond all praise, a fact we must ascribe to their being misinformed and wholly ignorant of the matter in question.

Now the charges against them which have come to our knowledge may be summed up under the following heads :

- (1) That these ladies call themselves religious women.
- (2) That they have undertaken Apostolic Missions in England.
- (3) That they have deterred others from entering religion and have kept them in their own community.

These charges and other details are so exact an epitome of what is contained in the inimical paper¹ already mentioned, as written some time in the previous year, that Bishop Blaise's Pastoral comes before us in the light of an answer written in refutation. The former document relates of the English Virgins that—

They strive to keep all the young maidens who come to them from England, persuading them in various ways to remain with them. For they speak about the wonderful

¹ From the Archives de l'État, Brussels, endorsed, "*Puellæ Angliæ Audomari.*"

perfection of this new Institute over all other orders of religious women, and their numbers are increased to sixty or thereabouts. Out of this number some sometimes go into England, where now there are six of them, who gadding about hither and thither, wish to be called and esteemed religious in their letters and in their speech, and attract others to them as the most perfect form of life. If they pretend by this reasoning to make superexcellent certain women who may be sent away into England, to work for the profit of souls, yet every one must see how many dangers this involves.

The writer then states that "scarcely any one approves of the new plan of these Virgins, except a few Fathers of the Society of Jesus by whose work and aid the thing was begun." Also that, "men of weight and authority were offended, and complaints lately written from England to the Prelates of the Church." Lastly, what is named as "the principal matter" is brought forward, that—

Any plan of these Virgins whatever they may be, is not only useless, but even dangerous to the other monasteries of the English nation in Belgium. If this new Institute seizes upon all those that come, as has happened in the space of the last four years, it necessarily follows that the progress of the old Institutes will be stopped, and that after a short time they will be dissolved.

These latter charges did what broad unscrupulous accusations sometimes do. They drew forth from Bishop Blaise a public statement of real facts, bringing to light the merits of the English Virgins and their Institute, and publishing opinions of men of

high worth concerning them, which might otherwise have remained hidden except to the very few. Of the Institute he says :

It will serve as a never-failing nursery to the convents of the same nation in Belgium, and those who are so concerned for the said convents, will do them better service, by striving to foster concord between them and this godly Institute and by binding them together in the closest bonds of mutual charity, than by disturbing the peace of others and burthening their own consciences. Nor are there any grounds for the slander current against the English Jesuits, of whom some are said to approve, others to disapprove, this Institute. We have seen the letters and testimonials of the leading Fathers, of their most distinguished, and we may add their most learned, men from Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, Belgium, all of whom agree in highly extolling this Institute. Nay this very day, there has been shown to us a letter, lately brought from England, written in London, at the beginning of this month, by an influential and intelligent personage, a copy of which we have had appended² to this letter, wherein is declared the high esteem in which these Virgins are held in England.

Of the first and third of these charges we find some trace in Father Lee's exhortation on New Year's Day, 1612, quoted above. They were then already in circulation. The lesson which Father Lee draws from the great subject of that day's feast seems to show that some among the English Virgins, especially the younger, found it hard, that having left their home and country and all

² This letter and the other documents mentioned as appended to the Pastoral, have unfortunately not yet been found in any Archives.

dear to them to live apart from the world, they yet could not, as was falsely laid to their charge, assume the name and enjoy the privileges of those religious who had entered approved orders. Speaking of our Lord's Circumcision, he says :

This being the eighth day, He would offer Himself to be subject to the law ; wherein I note that so long as He did not begin to suffer, there was no mention made of His Name. But so soon as He began to shed His Blood, His Holy Name was made known, and He was called Jesus, which is in Latin Salvator, Saviour of the world, so that those who truly seek to imitate Him may rightly have their names thus when they begin to suffer, and not before.

Afterwards, encouraging his audience to expect both lesser and what might prove far heavier sufferings in so privileged a vocation, he says :

So you see we must not sit always in contemplation and be good in ourselves, but you must seek also to make others good with the sweat of your brows, and be always ready to give, if need require it, the dearest blood in your bodies for God Almighty's honour. And think yourselves happy, if God will bestow that benefit upon you, to make you worthy to suffer anything for His love, and to learn to bear the yoke of our Lord.

In the words which follow, addressed to the young English pensioners who were present at this exhortation, we may see a reflection of the other reports which were passing in some places outside. "Now to these little ones, I speak to learn to carry the yoke of our Blessed Saviour in their youth." Then after commending to them great modesty of

outward behaviour, "for according to your outward carriage commonly is your inward, for where virtue is, it shows itself external, if it be true," he adds, "and, children, look you always follow that which God hath called you to, whether it be religious or any other vocation. Seek ever to do the will of God. For my part, I will ever advise and further you, to what place so ever, and so I know will all they that have any charge or care over you, to be as ready to help any other place as this. Wherefore, children, freely in God's name take your choice."

The evilspeaking of which Father Lee was thus cognizant in 1612, was doubtless that to which Bishop Blaise alludes, when he says, "I remember that similar slanders in regard to these pious ladies were circulated three years since. No sooner had they been brought to our knowledge, by a letter from an illustrious English gentleman, than we rebutted them." He proceeds further to refute the unworthy accusation that—

—they kept back ladies passing through St. Omer to other convents. After strict inquiry we find this charge to be wholly contrary to fact, for since the year 1610 in which they commenced, no less than forty-nine ladies have taken St. Omer on their way to other religious communities. Five went to the new monastery in Paris, ten to the monastery of St. Benedict at Brussels, eight to that of St. Augustine at Louvain, three to Douai, to the Poor Clares at Gravelines, nineteen; to the same in this city two, to the Teresians two, not to mention three others who but yesterday started for Gravelines. How guiltless they are of intercepting by their persuasions any who intend to go elsewhere, will appear from a document appended to this letter.

The Bishop also clears the English Virgins as fully from the two other imputations brought against them.

We can assert that by neither any peculiarity of dress nor by monastic inclosure, nor by acts, nor by any rule, nor by the assumption of the name, have they ever given themselves out to be nuns or religious women. They are fully aware that the title of religious depends solely on the grant of the Apostolic See. Nay more, we have been informed of the wise instructions of their Superior which were repeated before her departure for England, enjoining them when asked whether they were nuns or religious women, to answer both publicly and in private that they were not. Neither have they called nor do they call themselves religious, nor are they deemed such by others. If any one by reason of their godly and regular living choose to call them religious, they are not to be blamed, as every man of sense will allow.

The accusation of going to England as self-sent teachers is also sifted and put on the right footing. But it is evident that such a stigma would easily be laid and entertained against those engaged in the first attempts to introduce the active life among religious women. We shall find therefore that this remained henceforth as a charge against Mary Ward and her companions, which was perpetually recurring, with exaggerations and insinuations of every kind in their disfavour, until these amounted to falsehood, laying at their door the assumption of spiritual, and even priestly functions, which could never be theirs, and beyond this, evil doings of the worst description.

Bishop Blaise exposes the imputation in a few

simple words, leaving the truth to fight its own battle. "They have not set on foot apostolic missions, but using a liberty common to all, they have occasion from time to time to go to England on business, as for instance to secure their dowry and the like." He then mentions Mary Ward's recovery from dangerous illness, and the physician's orders that she should try her native air, with the reasons which caused her companions to accompany her. "If while at home," he proceeds, "they profit others by their good examples and godly conversation, who may blame them?"

The ending of this letter gives two or three strong sentences in commendation of the English Virgins and their Institute. "We may further assert that in this our city they are highly respected for their eminent virtues, the edification they afford and the noble work to which they have devoted themselves. Such is our opinion of this angelic manner of life, which has been suggested by the Holy Ghost for the evident advantage of the English Church and of the English Convents. In witness whereof, we have authenticated these presents with our signature, etc." Such minute explanations, followed by the emphatic commendation of so holy a Prelate as Bishop Blaise, were surely sufficient to have silenced the cavillers and satisfied all but warped and deeply prejudiced minds, as to the untruth of the reports in circulation. But we shall not find by our history that so happy a result was ever attained.

CHAPTER IX.

The First Filiation in London.

1614, 1615.

BISHOP BLAISE'S words, quoted in the last chapter, suggest to us the original and simple cause, not only of the journeys of the English Virgins to England, but of their first permanent establishment there. They returned to their native country, sometimes to obtain the payment of their dowers or annuities and of the pensions of the children entrusted to them, and sometimes for health, as well as to seek for and bring back fresh pupils and boarders. Having once left the joys of their home, and given themselves to God in the self-abnegation and observances of a religious house, they would shrink from again mixing in domestic life, however devout and well-regulated the households they had left. Some dwelling of their own was also necessary, where scholars could be received, and perhaps even kept for a time, before the opportunity occurred for the difficult arrangement of transferring them to St. Omer. In carrying out these objects it may well be believed that the reminiscences of Mary's former visit to London remained strongly impressed upon her mind. The many occasions ready to offer themselves even to

women, when there is the will to help a soul in need, among their own sex, must have been forcibly before her. In the words of her friend who knew her so well, "finding it much for God's service to have a residence of ours there," a house was sought and obtained, as suitable as the difficulties of the times would allow, for the ends in view.

It was not long before the new residence became a centre for Catholics both poor and rich, where they found ready sympathy and consolation in their numerous and often overwhelming troubles. And not only so, but the tempted and shaken in their faith received the help provided there for them in their spiritual needs, and many a wandering soul besides was reclaimed and brought back within the fold. To outward appearance the house presented the aspect only of a household of a few ladies in secular attire, living together as friends. For it must not be forgotten that in those years every Catholic dwelling was at the mercy of pursuivants and their odious visits of search, and every one of the inmates was liable to be hurried off to give an account of her faith at any moment. We shall hear how, in spite of this, the interior life was regulated, and what were the fruits of these arrangements.

It was to this residence then that Mary Ward's steps were directed on her journey to England at the end of the year 1614. Of her previous second and third journeys we have only incidental knowledge. Winefrid is entirely silent concerning them. It may be that she did not accompany Mary on these occasions, and therefore dilates on the fourth and others when

she seems to have been present. It is from one of Mary Ward's conferences with her companions at St. Omer, when about, perhaps, to select further workers for England before her own departure there at some later date, that we are able to fix the part of London where the English Virgins had been already living for some time in 1613. She relates an anecdote which refers without doubt, though she does not give her name, to *Dofia Luisa de Carvajal*, whose interesting and remarkable life has been for some years published in English.¹ Mary says :

You may judge, my Sisters, who live in a Catholic country, what great virtue they must have who are persecuted by these heretics in an unbelieving land. Such a thing has never before been heard or seen, that people have been persecuted and imprisoned, only because they were suspected of being associated with us and of living with us. You must bear in mind how necessary humility, confidence in God, patience, generosity, and all other virtues are in such circumstances. On St. Luke's day (Old Style) in the year 1613, there happened what I am about to relate. A Spanish lady of noble birth, and who was still more noble from her fervent desire to suffer persecution for Christ's sake, when she heard of the present great persecution, had an ardent thirst for martyrdom. For this reason she left her usual dwelling and her friends, and came into our neighbourhood, where she lived a very secluded and virtuous life, having with her four noble ladies of our nation. The constables and officials came on St. Luke's day to the house of this lady, broke into it, and found the lady pray-

¹ *Life of Dofia Luisa de Carvajal.* By Lady G. Fullerton. Quarterly Series. *Dofia Luisa* was a Spanish lady of high birth, who, attracted by an ardent desire to aid the persecuted English Catholics, and attain herself to the crown of martyrdom, came to live in England in 1605.

ing with her companions. One of them, however, lay dangerously ill of small-pox, and another was nursing her. They came into the room of the sick lady, who within twenty-four hours afterwards died of fright, deprived of all the holy sacraments of the Catholic Church.

The Spanish Ambassador (Count de Gondomar) received early intelligence of the matter, and failed not to come, and desired to know the cause of such unheard-of cruelty. But they showed him the order of the Parliament, with the information that they must carry away the lady and her companions. Their weakness and inability were pleaded, upon which a great lord offered his coach, and it was accepted. The Spanish lady, and one of her companions, were seated in one coach, the other two in another; the sick lady meantime was left alone, and died in the hands of the heretics. The windows of these coaches were kept open, and thus they were conducted a long distance through the public streets, the people thronging round calling out, "English nuns, English nuns!" When they arrived at the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he asked what it was? The official replied, that he had brought the Spanish lady. The Archbishop immediately ordered her to be taken to the Gatehouse, and put into the worst prison. Then he began to question and examine her companions, whom he had kept by themselves. "Whence is it," he said, "that you are in such black dresses, with veil and wimple? You have certainly been at one time at St. Omer." Upon this he called them sisters, or nuns, and caused them to be written down as nuns, for examination before a judge. At last he ordered them to be taken to prison, and to be put near the lady. The next day the Spanish Ambassador came before the Council, and asked that he should be allowed to speak. He pleaded with such effect for them, that he brought the whole Council to his side, except the Archbishop of Canterbury, who said that she was an allur-

ing, prating woman ; she sought out young girls in England, and sent them over to the nuns at St. Omer, from whence they came back afterwards and carried on their nuns' work in England.

You may now yourselves judge what sort of a virtue those must have who are to be sent to England. And certainly, as long as I shall live, none shall come over to me who are not of well-tried piety, and without the smallest fault or defect, for this would afterwards be injurious to the Institute. So also none shall be received in England who are not really fit to live a spiritual life, and who have not, at the same time, been well tried whether they have the true spirit of our calling. They may indeed follow it for themselves, but not be sent over to these, if they are not of well-known virtue, and have given some good proof of it.

Mary's words give a lively idea of what she and her companions were liable to, and show that their work in London was already sufficient to attract the notice of the chief authorities. The account tallies with that given in *Dofia Luisa's Life* by her Spanish biographer Luis Munoz. Mary makes a few additions, which she must have heard from her friends, who doubtless had been alarmed by Dr. Abbot, the Protestant Archbishop, a fierce persecutor of the Catholics, confusing, as he evidently did at the time, the Spanish lady with Mary Ward. His narrow soul could not grasp the idea that there could be two heroic women, likeminded in this, that they were ready to throw away their lives and all they had to win souls back to the true faith. But we shall see by-and-by that he found out his mistake as to Mary Ward.

* The house whence *Dofia Luisa* was forcibly taken

to prison, and where she had lived for two years, was in Spitalfields. It was in that neighbourhood, then, and for more than two years, that Mary and her companions had established themselves, making the date of their first settlement in England somewhere in the year 1611. They probably chose it as a quiet vicinity, Spitalfields being in those days but a suburb, on an ascent out of London; the houses with gardens round them, and fields and woods close by, as even the name shows. Wealthy people had their country houses there. It afforded also some protection to Catholics that the residences of the Flemish and Venetian Ambassadors were near at hand; and there was a still more important reason for Mary's choice, in that Mass was daily celebrated in the chapels of the Embassies, and the Blessed Sacrament had for some little time been reserved there. Being near neighbours, at a dangerous time, being fellow-worshippers day by day before the same altar, with so many mutual friends and kindred points of character, above all, with a common cause, and such a cause, at their hearts, it is impossible not to believe that Mary Ward and Doña Luisa knew one another. But the life of the heroic Spaniard was drawing to a close, and when Mary returned to England in 1614, she was already dead.

Winefrid Wigmore's office of "nurse" was a sinecure during this fourth visit. She thus describes how Mary was occupied. "When once arrived there, her health was one of her last cares," although she was sent to her native country for its re-establishment.

Occasions presented for the service of God and good of her neighbour. She refused none, neither could any want what was in her power, were it spiritual or corporal ; neither did she dispute why this or that person, or this or that place ; her only why and what was that God's honour were advanced and souls gained to Him, which was cause she assisted so many towards their being religious, as herself did not so much as know the persons, when by occasion of seeing her, they acknowledged the grace of being religious to have come by her means. She was laden with these holy labours, so as to have scarce time to eat or sleep.

So great was the love and esteem felt towards Mary, both from her natural character and from her personal holiness, that the house seems to have been besieged by those who came to her for advice and sympathy, directly it was known that she had arrived. People of all classes flocked to her.

It is not certain that the little community were still in the house at Spitalfields. We hear at another period of their having to move more than once to avoid discovery. They may have changed their dwelling for one near the Spanish Embassy in the Barbican, from the same reasons which led them to their first settlement. They had soon become objects of suspicion, and consequently subject to pursuivants' visits. When once this was an established fact, the length of stay in the same house would have to be very uncertain. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we read what were the employments of the household and who were their guests.

They were so holy and regular in their obser-

vances, and Mary had so well ordered all, both as to temporal and spiritual matters that—

Her family was living so religiously, as the perfecter sort avouched they found the same as in their own colleges and houses in Catholic countries. The bountifulness and largeness of her heart was so well tempered and conjoined with her religious poverty, as a certain very knowing and curious person, after a long observance and exact observation of her house, made this expression: "There was none wanted, nor anything wasted, no, not so much as a piece of bread," and that "the comportment of hers to one another was like most dear and discreet friends that had been long absent and did then meet."

Her respect to priests was such as served the less perfect to enter into consideration of the dignity of their character. No doubt but her devotion was to some more than others, but her chief in all was that high state of priesthood, and, in consideration of that, all were by her highly esteemed, and she took it for an honour to receive them in her house. She kept constantly two in her house, to the end her family might not want due assistance, and the other be free to help such as should need abroad, especially the poor, to whom priests could not get but with great danger and by night, not having justifiable pretexts, as to those of quality they have, their houses being frequented by all sorts.

In spite of all the persecuting efforts of the Protestants, there were numbers of faithful priests who during these years were risking their lives, both in London and throughout England, for the souls of their countrymen. Instead of being daunted by the savage executions which were witnessed from time to time, their fervour was but increased, and

others forthwith came over with joy from abroad to fill the empty places of those who had suffered.

In 1612, two secular priests and a Benedictine Father were martyred at Tyburn. Their heads and members were, as usual, exposed on London Bridge and various conspicuous places of the city, and the ghastly sight must often have met the eyes of Mary and her friends, as they made their way to the prisons or the houses of the poor. They were perhaps three out of the number of those priests who had temporarily found a safe asylum in their house, and whose labours they aided. Father Adam Contzen, of the Society of Jesus, Rector of the House at Munich, writing of Mary Ward's life at this period, says in a commendatory letter, "she sheltered and supported our Fathers in England." There were several of these Fathers at this time on the English Mission in London, among them Father Michael Walpole, brother of the martyr Father Henry Walpole, and Father Richard Blount, whose wonderful escapes from the pursuivants are well-known. It is likely too that Mary Ward would renew her intercourse with Father Holtby, her early friend, who is mentioned as in London in 1612, and on different occasions subsequently. Among the numerous other zealous workers in the city who would have shared Mary Ward's hospitality, may also be named Fathers Andrew Fairclough² and Blackfan, previous to their

² Father Fairclough was one of the four Catholics priests brought out of prison in 1614 to give their opinion on the genuineness of the entry of Archbishop Parker's consecration in the register at Lambeth. In spite of the imminent peril in which he stood, he is said to have exclaimed to Archbishop Abbot: "My lord, my father was a Pro-

imprisonment in 1612, and Father Lawrence Worthington and Father Francis Young, who were sent to the Gatehouse in 1615. Many, however, eluded the pursuivants, and besides those still at large, the London gaols were often full of priests, taken from time to time, who, aided by the lax condition of prison discipline, held constant intercourse with the Catholics outside. By this means they carried on their work of administering the sacraments and reconciling to the Church many who were brought to them by the zeal of others, within the walls of the Clink, the Counter, and the other miserable receptacles for State criminals of that time, and with as happy results as when at liberty.³ It may well be supposed that Mary and her household, in common with other Catholics, would be far from backward in their endeavours to alleviate the hardships these brave spirits endured by sending them both food and

testament, and kept a shop in Cheapside, and assured me that himself was present at Parker's and the first Protestant Bishop's consecration at the Nag's Head in Cheapside, &c. This supposed, my lord, I cannot but judge this a forged register."

³ A letter written in 1616, by Father Worthington named above, from the Gatehouse, to Father Owen, Rector of the English College at Rome, gives a graphic account of these proceedings and his own life there. Bribes, he says, overcame all difficulties. In one half of his room, therefore, he put up an altar of our Lady. "We had daily two or three Masses, frequently six or seven, according to the number of priests confined there. The Catholics in great number flocked to us, so that fifty or sixty auditors would attend our monthly sermons. In each week I heard more confessions there than I had heard in six or seven when free. On feast days the chapel was decorated with silk tapestry hangings, and the altar with flowers, candles, &c. To go out in the suburbs you give so much: I therefore at a great price purchase each week suburban circuits of this kind, that I may visit the houses of Catholics and Protestants also, if there is any hope of spiritual gain."

necessaries and money, the last-named being the permitted and only means of access to the hearts of gaolers in those days.

But these were not the only ways in which they sought to further and lighten the labours of the zealous missionaries. It cannot be doubted that souls were frequently lost, through fear of the bodily danger incurred in seeking out and conversing with those so distinctly under the ban of the law as were Catholic priests, who on their side had, for similar reasons, to make their pious domiciliary visits brief and hurried, above all to the homes of the poor.

To remedy this want, our dearest Mother employed herself and hers, sometimes disguised, and sometimes in her own clothes, using sometimes familiar conversation, other times authority; amongst the common and poor sort would first put them in doubt of their own error, and then lay the light before them. When it took, they instructed them how to make good confessions, and so prepared them as the priests had but to hear their confessions, and so avoid the danger which a long stay would have brought them, and they also have more time to employ in such functions as alone belonged to their character. God so blessed these her endeavours, as many, and persons of note, both for the quality of their birth and malice and perverseness of their heresy, were converted.

With employments such as these before them, it is not surprising that Mary should have announced to her companions that none but such as were of well-trying piety and virtue, should be allowed by her to adventure themselves upon their hazardous calling in England. Of the six first whom she took there

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the name of only one is recorded. This is Susanna Rookwood. Of her it is told in the necrological account of many of the early members of the Institute, written in old French,⁴ that "she was very often in danger of her life for the Catholic faith, to which she brought back a large number of souls, and preserved and strengthened many others. She was five times in prison for her religion, where she encouraged and refreshed the other prisoners both by spiritual and temporal means. At last she was thrown into a horrible dungeon, or rather hole, where she had to defend and preserve herself with a stick from the mice, rats, and other vermin which infested it. Here she had to remain for a considerable time, but was at last set free." She was not discouraged by these sufferings, but continued in England working in the Institute for many years.

From the words both of Bishop Blaise and Father Lee it appears that the labours and holy life of Mary Ward and her companions were justly appreciated in England at this time. The latter says in one of his addresses during her absence: "Your Superior is very well, thanks be to God, and hath found better friends than she did expect, and your course and manner of living marvellously well liked of and much commended."⁵ He then adds his own opinion on these points: "Thus you may see, that though God permit you some afflictions, yet He will have

⁴ Nymphenburg Manuscripts, called "Abrégé ou petit recueil de la sainte conversation de la vie, et de l'heureux décès de ce monde des Dames de l' Institut de Marie."

⁵ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

some to approve it; therefore, children, have confidence in God, for I hope your estate will continue till the Day of Judgment, and that many thousands will profit by you."

Meantime, while Mary was thus fully occupied in England in the years 1614 and 1615, the community at St. Omer were not without their exterior and interior troubles. Father Lee had left the city for Brussels and Louvain, and there were those among them to whom the absence of the two guiding minds, on whom they had been accustomed to lean, was no slight trial. Moreover, the great enemy of souls, besides using other temptations, stirred up their relations to seize the opportunity of endeavouring to draw the weaker and less fervent back to the world again. Father Lee had not however given up his watchful care, though at a distance. Their proceedings seem to have been reported to him, and his solicitude and affection are well shown in two long letters he wrote them from Louvain, while at the same time the high opinion he entertained of the merits of the Institute is made manifest.

In the first, dated May 2, 1615, and headed by the contemporary copyist, "A letter of Rev. Father Lee's to our Sisters and Novices," he says :

I call you my dearest children, yet then it is with most comfort, when for your constancy in virtue, when for your magnanimity, when for your true resolution, to the perfect contempt of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the despising of yourselves, you may truly be called perfect followers of Christ crucified. But this will hardly fully appear, but after some solid trials and tribulations. In

respect of your births and your parents' inclinations, you may be assaulted by them to leave your present estate for awhile only, as they will say, to try your vocation, whether it be good or not, whether you were only persuaded by others, and under this pretence by little and little to dispose you to the vanities of the world.

After further exhorting them to constancy, he continues :

I must now launch forth to express the comfort I have to hear and understand of the noble and saintly proceedings of most of you. [He here probably refers especially to what he has learned of those in England.] So pardon me, if I do not a little feel to hear that any one of you should look back to the world again. O misery of miseries ! what is more to be loathed in the sight of any of you ? Would not my heart so much as that I may hear any of you to do so. Your security is to do the will of your Heavenly Father, and persist immovable in the happy course He hath called you unto, which assure yourselves is so much the happier for you, in regard you have the true practice of the essential virtues which make you truly religious before God, and only wants the external denomination,, which doth but add an external glory and name unto it.

In conclusion, after many other arguments to strengthen them to persevere, drawn especially from the example of the virgins and martyrs of old, he adds, "My heart would bleed to hear any amongst you should prove so disloyal and great a coward, which that it never be, I shall continue my poor prayers, which I daily offer for you at the holy altar before God."

The letter of June 24, 1615, called "A Letter of

Rev. Father Lee's to the Company," is written to guard them against certain dangers which he saw they were likely to fall into, and he takes even a tone of reproof. We shall have good reason to see in a future chapter that he had not been mistaken in his fears, and that the keenness of his spiritual vision had enabled him to discern the seeds of evil passions rankling at that very time in the heart of at least one among the little community, which were to bring forth bitter fruit three or four years afterwards, nearly fatal to the well-being of all. He appears to refer first of all to the opposition which had been stirred up against them, and which had just given rise to Bishop Blaise's public letter :

Not well knowing, therefore, what troubles these last storms or oppositions might cause, I thought good to touch a point or two which might greatly make unto your peace of mind and spiritual profit. Troubles I call them, not for what I understand, to my great comfort, that you are much moved and troubled by them, but troubles indeed they be unto those who trouble themselves to see the quiet progress and good going forward of others, so as it is not the least sign of God's concurrence, where this desired tranquillity doth so much appear.

He then proceeds to the causes of his uneasiness, calling them "little domestic pickthanks, which, when outward enemies cannot prevail, get in by degrees and open and unbar the doors of our quiet conscience and make it a prey." These "little pickthanks" he explains to be want of submission to those who direct them, and "scruples of conscience, in which I will not suffer myself to be guided and directed,

in which, if I proceed too far, I shall, according to the opinion of holy Fathers, incur the sin of idolatry, neglecting both the Word of God and council of my spiritual directors, only making an idol of my own understanding, highly esteeming of that and preferring it before either of the other two." He then tells them how he had endeavoured to guard them from these dangers while settling and advancing them in their new vocation.

And as your course is not yet fully published to the world, so I thought it necessary, whilst I was with you, to endeavour to settle you in one same spirit and course of proceeding, so as if either death or other occasions should take me from you, you still persisting in the same, might proceed with daily profit and increase of perfection. To which end and purpose, I found it a matter of great consequence to bring all to use the Sacrament of Confession, only there to receive absolution of your sins, and not to allow it a place to tell histories, to rip up grievances with a manner of expostulation, rather condemning others than accusing yourselves, by which kind of proceeding you rather increase your affliction than find the quiet you seek for, as I assure myself your own experience doth teach, if at least there be any amongst you, who are so ignorant of your own good as to proceed in such manner, which I must tell you is much to the prejudice and hindrance of your own perfection, you thereby rather abusing than rightly using of the sacrament. If your case require further time of expostulation or of declaration, take other time for it out of the sacrament, yet so as to confer as rather to put into practice the remedies given you, than to use many words to wrest the minds of your directors to your own wills, in which lieth hidden much more spiritual pride than appeareth. Now in regard I have understood that some

have been more troublesome to their ghostly Fathers than I either wished or expected they would, whereby some further notice of troubled minds was conceived than made to the reputation and good opinion conceived of you, for this cause I write this generally unto you, not desiring the parties' names, but knowing it an evil worthy to be foreseen and carefully prevented. And therefore, as far as my authority may sway with you, I command and request you in the boiling Blood of our Blessed Saviour, that you be careful on this point, permitting yourselves for the rest to be guided and governed by your Superior as by the lieutenant of God Almighty, as indeed she is, by whom God hath bound Himself to concur.

Wherefore, if any of you are troublesome in this kind, it will be a great comfort for me to understand that you put this poor friend's advice in execution, as a known remedy against such evils, and those who will not follow it show want of humility and great stiffness of judgment. I will not flatter with you, in regard I desire not my own quiet but your good.

After exhorting them to beware of the sin of murmuring against Superiors, as being one severely punished by God, he encourages them finally to constancy in taking up the cross—

by patience in suffering of injuries, by your invincible charity, by becoming inseparable from your Heavenly Spouse Christ Jesus, Whom as it hath pleased to call you, and to make you pillars of this your thrice happy estate, so I humbly beseech Him that He will give you perseverance unto the end, to which I humbly beseech His Ever Blessed Mother to say Amen, to whose holy mediation I leave you all, yet in the Side of her dearest Son, that you may be mindful of the price He paid for you.

CHAPTER X.

Death of Father Lee.

1615.

MARY WARD came back from England in a very frail state of health. The date of her return to St. Omer may, perhaps, pretty accurately be fixed, as shortly before a conversation which she had with Anna Gage, whom she was sending to fill the arduous post of Superior over the rest who were on the English Mission. Anna Gage started for England October 5, 1615, and the notes still exist of the advice which she received from Mary before her departure. Mary herself was at that time requiring rest and refreshment, both for soul and body, but her energetic will remained unchanged. Fresh and important work was awaiting her on her arrival at St. Omer, and to prepare herself the better, she determined on making an eight days' retreat before involving herself in it. There is a short account of this retreat, in her own hand,¹ a fragment only, written on a loose page, among her Meditations :

I. H. S.

Some eight days before All Saints, 1615, I wrote to my confessor, for he was then weak and ill, my desire to make

¹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

those eight days some recollection, begging he would, &c., and to hear my half-year's confession when the time came, if his health would permit him. He condescended to both. My health was at that time very bad, and my cares many, the Institute upon drawing, and to be presently despatched to Rome; yet notwithstanding this, I felt in myself such ability and forces to rise early to make my hours of prayer, or do whatsoever else requisite or might be helping to my more perfect union with God, whereunto it seems our Lord God invited me, affording the means, and making that which was heavy at other times, at this to be no whit burdensome unto me. Yet His goodness only knows how negligently I spent the first four or five days. I made my confession, and after purposed to be more recollected and diligent these two days, having received upon the eve of All Saints.

It was upon one of these last two days of the retreat which Mary mentions that the occurrence took place upon which the inscription of the twenty-fifth picture of the Painted Life throws some light. The words are as follows: "God showed to Mary at St. Omer at the feast of All Saints, 1615, a just soul, in an unspeakable beauty, in which all the virtues appeared to be as in a tissue, through which it was not only alienated from all things earthly, perfectly stripped of itself, and wholly united to God, but it received also the true liberty of spirit, equanimity, heavenly wisdom, and capacity for all which the perfection of the Institute required."

Her own account of what she saw in this vision is contained in a letter to Father Lee, which remains still in her own handwriting.² The letter appears to

² Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

have been the second which she addressed to him on the subject, the first not having been sufficiently explicit.

I. H. S.

Dearest Father,—I would exceedingly gladly, both for my better satisfaction and greater security, acquaint you with what hath occurred in these two days, especially that which yesterday I wrote to your Reverence about, and am now going to set it down. The better I discern it, the less able I find myself to declare it. I seem to love it, and yet am afflicted in it, because I cannot choose but retain it, and yet dare not embrace it for truly good till it be approved. It seems a certain clear and perfect estate, to be had in this life, and such an one as is altogether needful for those that should well discharge the duties of this Institute. I never read of any I can compare in likeness to it. It is not like the state of saints, whose holiness chiefly appears in that union with God which maketh them out of themselves; I perceived then an apparent difference, and yet feel myself drawn to love and desire this estate more than all those favours. The felicity of this course (forasmuch as I can express) was a singular freedom from all that could make one adhere to earthly things, with an entire application and apt disposition to all good works. Something happened also discovering the freedom that such a soul should have had to refer all to God, but I think that was after, or upon some other occasion; how soever, that such a thing there was I am very certain, seemed in my understanding to see a soul thus composed but far more fair than I can express it.

It then occurred, and so continues in my mind, that those in Paradise, before the first fall, were in this estate. It seemed to me then, and that hope remains still, that our Lord let me see it, to invite me that way, and because He would give me grace in time to arrive to such an estate.

at least in some degree. That word justice, and those in former times that were called just persons, works of justice, done in innocency, and that we be such as we appear, and appear such as we are—those things often since occurred to my mind with a liking of them. And that you may know all, and judge according—(though several times since I began to write I have found an extraordinary horror in myself, and withal a fear that you would see it all to be nought, and be much afflicted at it), but howsoever, blessed be our Lord Who hath provided me of such as can tell me which is good. I have moreover thought upon this occasion that perhaps this course of ours would continue till the end of the world, because it came to that in which we first began.

(After) both that day and the next, as my meditations further discovered the condition of this Institute, methought I better understood these particulars, one by one, practically not confusedly, than ever before I had done. They led me severally to that first estate, as the fountain and best disposition for a soul to be in that would perform all this well, and from whence I could without labour return to them again, and discern with great clearness and solid tranquillity the excellency and convenience of them. So as a great part of these two days hath been exceeding pleasing and I hope profitable, for I end with desires to be good (which I see I am not) and without that it seems impossible I should be able to do good, at least according to the estate of life whereunto I think I am called, for my will is so exceeding stubborn and perverse, as that it will not let me possess any good with certainty or without fear to lose it again, and how much this indisposition for God's favours doth hinder me in all, I can better perceive in myself than show to those I should. I humbly beseech you, obtain my amendment of God, how dear soever it cost. Bestow on us all your blessing.

Your ever unworthy,

Upon All Saints Day, 1615.

M. W.

Mary Ward was at this time, as her words show, arranging the form of her Institute and bringing its details into such a shape that they could be laid before the Holy See. The light which she obtained as to the holiness of life requisite in those who are to instruct and mould the minds of others acceptably to God was of inestimable value to her at such a moment. It left behind a deep and lasting impression, which never wore away, which she made use of as a future guide to herself and others. Almighty God enlightened her still further, using the same means, by a repetition of this vision of a just soul three years subsequently. At the present moment she had need of great strength from above, for a heavy sorrow was in store for her, of which she appears to have been little aware, or, perhaps, rather, she shut her eyes, unknown to herself, to the latent fears, which a second letter of hers betrays, as to the future. Father Lee was growing increasingly ill. He had been sent to Brussels and Louvain, in hopes the change to a better climate would reinstate him. But, on the contrary, he became worse, being, in fact, in a consumption, which was fast approaching its termination. The doctors ordered him to try his native air, probably as a last hope of recovery, and thus his long-cherished desire of offering up his life in the English Mission seemed likely to be realized. He came back to St. Omer on his way, but fresh illness obliged him to remain there for some time.

There are notes of two or three addresses given by him during these last days at St. Omer. One of them is a sort of running commentary on the rules

of the community. He says: "By reason I am going to take my journey so shortly, and partly by reason your company is increased lately"—perhaps by those Mary Ward brought back with her from England—"as also in the presence of this good Father, that he may better know your proceedings, I thought it good to read your rules and speak a little of some points of them. These are they that by observing you are come to what you are." The Father whom Father Lee thus mentions was most likely Father More,³ not long afterwards spoken of as the confessor of the community, and who probably succeeded him in that office. In ending, Father Lee says again: "To him I commend you all, and desire you in all things to respect and esteem him as myself, for I may say I found not any since I came to St. Omer's I could more willingly have left you unto."

A few short extracts from these addresses will give some further insight as to the spirit and practices at this period of Mary and her companions which Father Lee had zealously laboured to promote and strengthen. In one headed, "How to proceed against temptations," he says:

The greatest envy that our spiritual enemy beareth unto any creature, is unto those whom he doth perceive to be most desirous to attain unto the estate of true perfection, as well knowing, that one such soul is more grateful to God, and able to obtain more at His hands than many others together. The securest means to arrivé at or attain

³ Perhaps Father Thomas More, brother of Father Henry More, the historian. The former was banished from England when on the mission there, some time subsequently to the year 1614.

unto this perfection, is to seek God with a pure intention, that is for Himself only, and not for any particular or sensible consolation, by very exact obedience in the practical execution of our Institute and by an humble and prompt correspondence to God and Divine motions and inward inspirations. And therefore let all your actions be proportioned exactly by obedience, and infallibly the enemy can have no part in them, whereas be they never so good of their own nature, not being done in obedience, there is danger in them.

Labour to find reasons to think yourself inferior to all, yet must you not in any case be dejected, for this is against humility, for the more we be truly humble the more we are confident in God.

Have a great care of your outward carriage, that as much as may be, there appear no signs of a troubled mind. Labour that it be grave and cheerful, and the example which others will take by it will be greatly to your merit, yea, when you least think it.

Apply your mind to what you go about, and think nothing little which is done for God in obedience.

Admit not easily any thoughts which you perceive either very sudden or very strange, how holy soever they seem, but before you admit them, say three times or more, Your holy will, O Lord, be fulfilled, and never mine, for the merits of your bitter Passion.

Omit not the doing of ordinary penances because you seem not to profit by them, do all for the love of God, and leave it to Him whether you profit less or more by them.

Propound unto yourselves for the zeal you have unto souls, that you will be very punctual in observing of the Institute, that so the whole company may be moved to the true perfection thereof.

Say often to yourselves, Sweet Jesus, ever direct the Society of your Holy Name, have mercy on all sinners,

and make us poor beginners such as you would have us to be.

It is good you know that the spiritual enemy doth not know, whether his suggestions do trouble us or not, but by the outward signs we give, and therefore the more he perceiveth us not to be troubled and to condemn them, the more his pride is confounded.

The temptations of the enemy be like papers diversely painted, of which, if one do not please the nature of man, commonly another doth, and still we turn them over until we find one that liketh us, which we begin to behold more curiously. So fareth it with us in spirit, if we are not caught with one temptation, the enemy preferreth still another, but all is but paper whatsoever the outward appearance be, which paper will be presently destroyed, either with fire or water. So all those temptations, what show soever they make, will easily be consumed or abolished, by any act of charity, that is elevation of our mind to God, or the water of humility, acknowledging our unableness without the assistance of God.

To remove all matter of trouble or temptation from us, there is no better means than by earnestly begging of God with this act, Your holy will, O Lord, be ever done and never mine; for the merits of your bitter Passion, make us such as you would have us to be, and our own continual practice for the obtaining of the virtue of indifference, always or very often remembering that, I have given myself to do the will of God, that is, to do or suffer what God will, where God will, and when God will. The true obtaining of this virtue is a beginning of Heaven in this world. These acts of petition to be made especially after meditation, examen, and receiving the Most Blessed Sacrament, to which, if you have a true devotion all is secure. This true devotion consisteth that we come to God for God, when obedience so requireth, and be contented to leave God for God.

Father Lee's concluding words in his last beautiful instructions, headed in the manuscript¹ "Practical notes for going forwards in perfection," are :

For the rest, the height of perfection consisteth in a continual denial and abnegation of yourself, and that for desolations in prayer, chapters, reprehensions, little esteem to be made of you, to be employed in mean offices, take all this, as bread from Heaven when they happen unto you, or be laid upon you. But if you can bring yourself them, and to be glad in your soul when you have them, though nature murmur at them, assure yourself you begin Heaven in this world. But this is gotten by long practice and denial of yourself, and especially by making often acts of resignation unto the will of God after communicating. Almighty God give you grace to persevere ; have confidence in God. I for my own part have great confidence, and indeed receive much comfort, now being sent in mission, that is, I am now under the standard of the Cross to fight and give my life and shed my blood for Christ. I only commend this to all, exact observance of religious discipline, especially to officers, for by this those who are under you will profit more, and so Christ Jesus bless you all. God will reward you for all, and I will not be unmindful of you.

His prayers for them were to be made before the throne of God in Heaven, and no longer on earth, for Father Lee died within two or three weeks, while waiting for a ship at Dunkirk in which to cross to England. Mary Ward's second letter may have been addressed to him after his leaving St. Omer for that place, or, perhaps, as her own words would rather show, he was too ill to see or write to her for some

¹ For this instruction see Note II.

days before his departure, and sent her, therefore, his farewell messages through Father Flacke, to which the following is her reply.

I.H.S.

Dearest Father,—How gladly would I say something, and yet how wary I ought to be not to be troublesome. Several things these days past I have conceived, which I might have benefited myself much withal if I had used them well, for they were of that kind which touched me nearest, and I think I have committed greater faults other times, upon less occasions, yet I have done many things ill in those, which I hope once to have means to tell you at large. That which chiefly seems needful now to be spoken of is, I feared you were so desirous not to remember us at all, as that either to hear from us, or of us, was exceedingly troublesome. This, together with many fears that our Lord would take you, the scarcity of such guides (which God seeth and knoweth I speak according to my conscience and so far forth experience), the greatness of my charge, which I will ever willingly do my best in, my security in following your direction, which is the greatest content touching myself and all I have to do, which I have in this life (next to recovering), though I confess myself too, too ungrateful, and very unworthy of that which so few hath, seeing I never obeyed as I should, I beseech you humbly and for the love of God to pardon me. It is the chiefest cares which in my conscience I find of fears, that I am not so well disposed towards God, as by those good signs I many times think, especially since my last recollection, when if I had had but a little of that means and helps which heretofore I have, I think I should have profited much more than ever. But God is wise, Whose holy will be ever done.

X

Though I be thus tedious, yet I crave nor expect no answer. I will now end with these three petitions.

1. That if I have given you any cause of disgust, let me know what it is in one word, and I will not rest till I mend it.
2. So long as we both live, do not leave to direct me in what manner and measure yourself shall please, though the more it is the more according to my satisfaction and security.
3. If it should please our Lord to call you when I am absent from you (which may very well happen, though many years hence), if that course be continued which Father Flacke did insinuate as your direct mind; first, that I should by no means come to England till businesses at Rome were despatched, how long so ever; and that being in England I must expect to see you seldom, or rather to receive what help I had from you only by writing, if this be kept as I said before, though we both may live many years, yet we are not likely to be with each other at that time. Therefore, dear Father, my humble petition for Christ Jesus' sake is, that if any such thing should happen when, or wheresoever, you would please by writing or message to appoint me whom to obey, and so I shall do the will of God by your direction living or dying.

In my coming to England, I shall neither endeavour nor desire to move, till I be assured that your will is I should, thither or elsewhere.

If I send anything wrapt in white paper, or write any lines thereon, it will please you to look therein. I humbly and many times beg your blessing for us all, whose happy proceedings I trust, in sweet Jesus, shall be your present comfort and everlasting crown.

Yours for ever most unworthy,

November 27, 1615.

M. W.

It is in keeping with the entire conformity of will to God's will, which was one of the graces remarkable

in Mary Ward, that not a remark or expression of lamentation or murmuring is to be found in her writings upon an event which was, perhaps, the heaviest blow possible to be inflicted upon herself and her companions at such a critical moment. Father Roger Lee was the only friend whom Mary had in whom she could wholly trust, and who had a full knowledge and entire sympathy in all her difficulties in the arduous work she had in hand. He knew besides all that God had done both for it and for her, and could weigh and judge her consequent responsibilities with regard to what she was undertaking. She must well have felt that there was no one who could take his place, or on whose counsel she could depend as she had upon his. The love and veneration also which Father Lee's great virtues had gained for him, both within and outside his own Order, as well in England as elsewhere, had made his protection and support a bulwark of defence to the young Institute, and to human eyes his prolonged life was consequently of signal importance to its future welfare. But the judgment of Almighty God was altogether different, and Mary was left alone to face her difficulties, and to depend more than ever day by day upon what He Who had begun the work would give for its continuance.

The blow which we have seen she dreaded when dimly seen in the distance was not the less because Mary had learned to believe that it was through no chance accident or human choice, but by a special providence of God, that Father Lee's direction had been given to her and to the rising Institute. Among

Mary's writings nine years subsequently, there is a memorandum made by her of special graces which she had received from "our Blessed Saviour and our Blessed Lady." Some of these graces will be described as they occurred at a future time. Of the former, she places as "1st, the spilling of the chalice," which we know was the means of her finally entering upon her religious vocation. The third of the gifts from our Lord she names thus: "Knowledge that Father Lee was ordained by Him for my director and help." The meaning of these words is explained by one of the Painted Life pictures, the twenty-third of the series, which represents "Mary at St. Omer," engaged in prayer, in anxiety as to Father Lee's spiritual direction, and "she resolves to give up both him and everything else which could in the least lessen the perfection of Divine love, when Christ visibly appeared to her and said, 'It is not thou, but I who chose him for thee,' through which she was entirely consoled and freed from all solicitude."

There is a loose page among Mary Ward's manuscripts, in which she thus writes of Father Roger Lee. After mentioning two occasions on which he had effected cures by making the sign of the cross over the diseased parts, she says:

Wonderful was his grace in curing and comforting of souls, as was the progress of those who were directed by him, for I have heard often those say who conversed with him, that none who had conference with him who did not find in his soul an increase of grace. A Father of the College of St. Omer told me while the good Father was yet living, perhaps on some occasion of wonderful grace that

our Lord had bestowed upon him in this kind, and offered this of his own knowledge. A lady and a certain gentleman of the English nation, being long and grievously perplexed in conscience, and for remedy had often undertaken many painful pilgrimages to favoured places, Our Lady of Loreto, and others, but still remaining very much oppressed in conscience, he happened to declare himself to this our Father, and making a general confession unto him, he departed with singular quiet and unexpected repose of mind. This is all of and concerning happy Father Roger Lee.

CHAPTER XI.

The Plan of the Institute.

1615, 1616.

No better insight can be obtained concerning Mary's spiritual history during the period we have been considering than by a paper in her handwriting,¹ containing the following thirty-five resolutions. There is no date to this paper, but the contents prove that it was written, perhaps at intervals, during the years previous to Father Lee's death, but after the Institute had taken some degree of shape :

1. I will endeavour that no sensible motions, nor occurrent accidents, change easily my inward composition nor external carriage, because freedom of mind and calmness of passions are so necessary both for my own profit in spirit and proceedings with others.

¹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

2. Because I am inclined to affect and undergo more willingly such things as hath the title or outward appearance of excellency and greatness, I will henceforth endeavour to embrace and execute more simpler things with a particular love, devotion, and diligence, and will be always watchful if, at any time my help should be requisite in greater matters, I spend not my time and forces in seeking my own content nor the prayers of others.

3. O how many and excellent hath been the means which I have had to be good, the multitude, kinds, and continuance thereof! I will once a week make my meditation upon this point (if obedience will permit), endeavouring to stir up gratitude, confusion, and an ardent desire to begin.

4. Being inclined to please myself much in all such things as gives satisfaction to sense, and to receive interior motions and other spiritual things with a sensual kind of greediness, seeking presently to love and enjoy them (with a natural affection), my heart languishing after delights, I will hereafter in all such occasions have a singular care that at the same instant when I find and perceive myself thus to seek my own content, then forthwith to leave and deny myself, offering that content unto God, whom I have so often displeased, loving Him for Himself and all other goods for Him.

5. Seeing my loathness to suffer hath been the cause of so many excesses, I purpose henceforward to embrace all contrary things as due for my sins, and the part and portion which for myself I have chosen, repeating in such occasions that voice of the Prophet, *Cognovi Domine quia aequitas judicium tua, etc.*

6. These I purpose most specially to observe, except at such times as my director shall think fit to dispense, an hour of mental prayer, my daily examen of conscience, and to say the Great Office.

7. I will endeavour with great sincerity and plainness to make twice a year a general confession, and this unto him into whose hands our Lord's will is I should wholly commend the care of my soul, and whom I beseech for God's sake not to leave me till he send me to heaven. Then likewise will I renew my vows, and give an exact account of my conscience, touching all things both good and evil.

8. I will ever fly all manner of esteem, and yet carry myself, so as I may be grateful to all.

9. I will never endeavour that any love me for myself, and yet will I labour to love all for God and in Him.

10. I will never contradict in desire, word, nor action the will of my Superior.

11. I will embrace all his words and commands with great conformity of will and judgment. And will execute all that he commands or desires, with great devotion, reverence, and promptitude.

12. I will every day labour to become perfect in obedience, kissing the five wounds of our Saviour crucified, that I may be such in this virtue as he would have me.

13. Touching the Institute and this course of life, I will do without exception what he thinketh best.

14. If I find contradictions or inward vexations about this thing of obedience, yet in such sort as I consent not unto them, I will not trouble myself with confessing them, but endeavour still to go forward as I have purposed.

15. When any lights or other motions occur unto me about the Institute, I will still commend the same unto the sacred wounds of Christ, and make acts of resignation.

16. I will intend no other thing hereafter in all I do, think, or speak, than the greater glory of God.

17. I will daily endeavour to become more perfect, that my works may be the more agreeable to so excellent an end.

18. Whatsoever I find I want I will make haste to ask it of God.

19. What I would confer with my director absent, I will at my first opportunity confer with God, who is always present.

20. I will labour always to overcome my passions in the beginning.

21. I will never for any human respects whatsoever, do against or hinder the greater glory of God.

22. I will be always ruled and conform myself wholly to the will and judgment of my director in all things.

23. I will always in the tolling of the hour remember and call to mind the poor estate I now perceive myself plainly to be in, so void of all virtue, and full of all imperfection, and making an act of contrition I will beg earnestly the virtue of humility.

24. Always when the clock strikes, I will lift up my mind to God, and reflecting briefly that every reasonable soul is made to His image, I will beg grace for myself and all others, especially our company and the Society of Jesus.

25. I will endeavour always to have a ready mind and courageous heart to undergo and exercise all means which may help me to perfection.

26. I will endeavour to be always greatly united with my director, because God doth govern me and infuse His holy grace into my soul by him : he also doth manifest the Divine will, and following his direction, I shall infallibly receive sufficient grace to execute the same perfectly.

27. I will not permit in myself the least repugnance to whatsoever obedience shall ordain, nor nourish in myself a contrary opinion, my will with obedience shall be always one and the same in every occasion, whether the thing be great or small, prosperous or adverse, easy or hard.

28. Feel and taste how sweet the Lord is! I will frequent the Holy Sacraments so often as I may be permitted.

29. I will labour to my uttermost to prepare myself well, remembering the greatness and excellency of the thing.

30. After confession I will endeavour to cut off all affection to my former faults.

31. After Communion I will give myself much to God, with an ardent desire to perform His holy will.

32. I will read every day something of some devout book.

33. I will use often with humility to speak unto our Lord, of whose mercy, grace, and especial assistance I have always so much need.

34. I will follow the counsel which blessed Father Ignatius so much recommended and practised, which is always to walk in the presence of my God.

By a change here in Mary's handwriting, it would appear that the resolutions which follow were written at a later date than those preceding. The hand becomes of a larger, bolder type, and is that used by her after her first early years were passed. The wording of the last resolution also shows that when it was written the Institute had attained a certain fixed form, which Mary considered it her duty to look upon as a model for her life, and that it was not a matter for consideration and choice as hitherto.

Lord, let that be made possible to me by Thy grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature.

35. I will especially endeavour, both in myself and others, the exact observance of times and Rules.

I will always love, highly esteem, and choose, if I may be permitted, this holy Institute. And in myself and my proceedings I will seriously endeavour to have and exercise

those virtues which are proper and peculiar to this Institute, truly, solidly, and perfectly. To conclude, I will take it for a pattern to level my life and actions by, so far forth as obedience will permit.

Note.—It is necessary that we arm ourselves with a great desire to suffer much and many crosses.

These resolutions require little comment. They are the aspirations of a soul which could not be content with a low degree of perfection, and which had already made great advances in the upward path. Some of them clearly prove how entirely Mary submitted to Father Lee's judgment in affairs connected with the formation of the Institute, even when contrary to her own sentiments. From the recurrence and addition from time to time of more stringent rules for herself concerning obedience, it is plain that this submission was by no means always easy of attainment, and involved her besides in outward difficulties, which made the fulfilment often little less than heroic.

Mary did not the less persevere, and it may well be believed that she was assisted besides in other matters, in the work of drawing up the plan of her Institute for the eye of the Sovereign Pontiff, by one who was so fast and faithful a friend and so able a counsellor. It was probably for the very purpose of preparing and finally arranging them that, by his desire, she returned from England. Nothing short of some strong necessity would have brought her back thence, for her heart was ever urging her to be at work among the souls going astray from the true Fold, with whom God had given her such power

and success. The task before her, with so many to suggest and object, was certainly an arduous one. Nor was Father Lee without his difficulties in the part which he took regarding it, for great opposition was raised in putting together the formula of the Institute, especially from the Jesuit Fathers. The name and the exterior framework of the Institute were then the two great subjects of discussion. Of these Mary writes thus to the Nuncio Albergati, in the letter quoted already :

Then would they needs, that at least we should take the name of some Order confirmed, or some new one, or any we could think of, so not that of Jesus. This the Fathers of the Society urged exceedingly (and that do still every day more than other) telling us that to any such name we may take what Constitutions we will, even theirs in substance, if otherwise we will not be satisfied : but by no means will they, that we observe that form which their Constitutions and Rules are writ in, which say they, are not essential or needful. The neglect of these offers did and do cause extreme troubles, especially for the first seven years, while my confessor (whom I had tied myself to obey) lived, they urging him in many things to say as they said, though against his own judgment and knowledge, as after I understood, neither could he yield unto them in all. One time in particular they urged him so much about the name, as that he made answer to divers grave Fathers, that if their case were his they durst not urge any change. Concerning the name, I have twice in several years understood, in as particular a manner as these other things I have recounted, that the denomination of these must be of Jesus. And thrice, I think more often, of the inconveniences would happen to both parts, if ours should have any dependency of the Fathers of the Society.

The last sentence shows in part the cause why Mary had entirely abstained from seeking to place her Institute under the jurisdiction of the Society, in the same way that the Franciscan and Dominican nuns were under that of their respective Orders. With regard to the name, it was perhaps in consideration of the strong feeling evinced against their adopting that of the Society of Jesus that she and her companions never assumed it for themselves. In no public document do they ever give themselves anything but the humble appellation of the English Virgins or English Ladies. That it was their wish eventually to obtain the name they so much revered, when the Holy See should bless them with its final sanction, it is easy to believe. We find accordingly that their friends, and still more their opposers, readily gave it them and at an early period, and most naturally, from the fact which soon became well known, that their Rules and way of life were modelled after the Rule of St. Ignatius.

Mary's words also exhibit the part which Father Lee took in the pending controversy, and the plea which he used in her favour. But besides this we have his own testimony as to the public exertions he had made in favour of the rising Institute, both with Bishop Blaise and also at Rome, in order to lay the foundation for placing it upon a permanent footing in the Church. In his farewell messages to Mary he had urged impressively upon her the necessity of an immediate application to the Holy See, and with good reason. Paul V. had proved himself a kind friend and patron to the different religious works that

had been springing into life during his pontificate and that of his predecessor. It was of primary importance not to delay the intended application, but during his lifetime to seek the fostering protection of the Head of the Church for the young plant, which had already begun to feel the premonitory blasts of storms scarcely yet above the horizon.

The task was at length completed and the document prepared for transmission. It must have been before Father Lee's death, and perhaps, with his cooperation that Mr. Thomas Sackville was selected as the bearer to Rome of the petition of the English Virgins. In a later memorial of theirs in Italian, to be quoted in its place, they name him as "*una persona principale*, of the kingdom of England, a relative of several among themselves, very learned, and of great holiness of life."² He arrived in Rome in January, 1616 (New Style), and must have performed his errand well and quickly, aided doubtless through the exertions of Father Lee by many in authority there, as the date of the answer

² Mr. Thomas Sackville, one of the family of the Earls of Dorset, was the founder in pecuniary matters of a "House of Writers," of the English secular clergy, called the "College of Arras," established at Paris in 1611, for the purpose of assisting the Catholics of England in their controversy with Protestants. Dr. Bishop, afterwards Bishop of Chalcedon, was one of the original members. Dr. Champney, another of them, writes of Sackville to More, the agent of the secular clergy in Rome: "Assure yourself he is the fittest man I know to take away all let, and set forward all good designs." In the Pilgrim-Book of the English College, Rome, is the following entry of the year 1616: "Lord Thomas Sackville, the illustrious, January 3. Left the Hospice April 22 (*Records of English Province, S.J.* By H. Foley. Vol. vi. p. 594).

of the Holy See to the memorial of which he was the bearer is in April of the same year.

The petition³ of the English Virgins which was laid at the feet of Paul V. is a well drawn up document in Latin, and contains an admirable sketch of the spirit and object of the projected Institute as well as of the employments, status and form of government of its members.

It is observable that there is no attempt to propose any name for the intended Congregation. The afflicted state of heretical England is the moving cause of the undertaking, and to aid as far as women can in the great work of its conversion, is the object laid down. The two great ends to be kept in view by those entering the Institute are, their own perfection, and the salvation of their neighbour. For themselves, their continual study is to be the acquirement of virtues by the total abnegation of self-will and self-love; for their neighbour, they are to engage in the education of girls, and, by any other means judged suitable, to labour for the propagation of the Catholic Church.

The chief differences petitioned for between the new Congregation and existing orders of women, are the following: non-inclosure, consequent on the necessities of their work; the division of the members into four grades instead of three, with the power of dismissing any who prove unfit or unruly; a Head to the whole congregation in the person of a Chief

³ Entitled "*Ratio Instituti*," a manuscript in *Anglia Hist.* 1590—1615 (*Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome*). A translation of this document is given in Note III. of this Book.

Superior ; and its subjection to the Sovereign Pontiff alone instead of to the jurisdiction of any order of men or to the Diocesan. To these may be added, the non-obligation to a conventual dress, or to any special acts of penance binding to all, with other minor matters. The Congregation is to be composed of Novices, Lay-Assistants, Mistresses, and the Professed who are to be called Mothers. The Lay-Assistants and Mistresses take simple vows after two years' noviciate. The latter, when professed, which is to be at the will of the Chief Superior, who is to judge of their fitness, are to take what are called in the memorial, "the three essential vows of religion, besides other especial vows." In another sentence the first-named vows are inferred to be solemn.

No mention is made of the Rule of St. Ignatius in this document, but from the above outline the model whence Mary Ward drew her plan is easily discernible. After speaking further of the condition and numbers of their body at that time, and the largeness of the fair field for labour in the service of souls which lay before them, the memorial in concluding has the following touching petition, "But should the success of our project appear doubtful, and its confirmation be in consequence deferred, we humbly beg that your Holiness would at least deign, by granting us your favour and approbation, to increase our present fervour, and to let us hope that if we persevere in religious piety and in those labours for the good of souls which, as we have said, we have already undertaken, we may be at least deemed religious at the hour of death and so end our lives."

Such a request coming from persons practising so holy a way of life as that of Mary Ward and her companions, and at the same time frequently exposing themselves to the peril of death for the salvation of souls, may well be thought not unreasonable. Alas! for those who in after years did their best to prevent the fulfilment of these holy desires.

Mr. Thomas Sackville, together with the petition, carried strong recommendatory letters from Bishop Blaise in favour of the new Institute, to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and others. No copies of these letters have, as yet, been found, but in the Nymphenburg Archives a duplicate of the reply of Paul the Fifth to the memorial of the English Virgins, through Cardinal Lancellotti,⁴ remains. It is addressed to Bishop Blaise, and upon it there is still, what is of present interest, the Cardinal's seal with the inscription round it, *Horatius S. R. E. Præs. Cardinalis Lancellottus; Præses. Cong. Concil.*

In this letter, dated April 10, 1616, Cardinal Lancellotti says, that he writes in the name of the Congregation of the Cardinals of the Council of Trent, to whom the Pope had referred the petition of the English Virgins, which petition His Holiness considers most just. Bishop Blaise is then commanded to take upon him the chief care and protection "of the said Virgins that they, by Divine help, be the more inflamed to religion and produce daily more abundant fruits of their labours. And if," the letter proceeds, "as we trust, it shall so come to pass, then

⁴ For translation of this letter see Note IV. to this Book.

the Apostolic See will also deliberate about confirming their Institute."

The joy which the receipt of the document must have caused to the community at St. Omer, especially at the implied hope of confirmation at a future time, could only have been damped by the loss of the kind Father, to whose labours they in large measure owed the success of the mission to Rome, and by the thought that he was no longer on earth who would more than any other have rejoiced in their gladness.

Mary Ward in addressing Pope Gregory the Fifteenth some years subsequently, speaks of having lived with her companions according to the rule of life practised by the Society of Jesus from the year they went to St. Omer. Father Lee's address upon the rules of the community show these to have been hitherto, probably in submission to the suggestions urged by others, rather an arrangement from those of St. Ignatius, than the actual rules themselves. But from what Mary writes to the Nuncio, she must finally have adopted the rules in their integrity, except where they contained what was unsuitable for women, and with a few additions necessary from present circumstances. This was perhaps done before the mission to Rome. Father Lohner gives a kind of *précis* both of the practice of the English Virgins as to the rules, and of the regulation of their day, at this period. Of the latter he says :

The usual order of the day is this : At four o'clock in the morning they are awake, and at half-past four they meditate for an hour ; the rest of the time until eight o'clock is spent in hearing Mass, vocal prayers and spiritual

Y

reading; then they go to their business in the house or their office, and remain thus until a quarter to ten, at which time the examen of conscience is performed for a quarter of an hour, and afterwards they go immediately to dinner. When dinner is ended a liberal recreation is granted until half-past twelve, after which half-an-hour is again passed in spiritual reading and then they betake themselves to their several duties in the house and their offices until five o'clock, from which time until six they apply themselves to vocal prayer. At six o'clock follow supper and recreation until eight, then they say together the Litanies of Our Lady and the Saints and whatever the Superioress enjoins, after which examen is made for a quarter of an hour, the points of meditation on the following day are read aloud, and the usual night's rest is taken.

Father Lohner's summary shows that, to the three vows which the English Virgins took, was added a promise not to leave the Institute. This promise is perhaps what is intended in the Plan of the Institute, when in speaking of the three vows taken at the end of the novitiate, it says, that the Mistresses and Lay-assistants "on their part remain bound to this rule of life for as long as it shall seem good to our Superior to keep them, and they are not dismissed." It may have been subjoined when Mary arranged all the details to send to Rome, for of an earlier period Father Lee says, in the address when Barbara Babthorpe was made Superior: "Hitherto it hath been only love that hath holden you all together and no other tie or obligation." Doubtless experience had shown that, to give the framework of the new Institute more solidity, it was better to have some equivalent for the vow of stability, and thus to give

it a bulwark, though in another form, such as perpetual inclosure was to cloistered orders. The formula of this promise has been preserved, and comes down among the papers⁵ and letters of the agents of the secular clergy at Rome, dating about 1625. In the margin on the top of the paper is written: "I had this on condition to show it none, but to my lord of Chalcedon and to one other; so I pray show it none, but use it for public occasion." It is headed:

A coppie of the Inglish Jesuitesses vowe to Mrs. Marye Ward who these call Mother Cheefe Superior.

I N. N. seeing clearly how much I am bound to God for His gracious vocation of me to so high and happy a course as this, wherein I have by the assistance of God's grace dedicated myself unto Him by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience usual in our company. And considering how much I am obliged in charity, justice, and gratitude to the company and Superiors thereof, for their acceptance of me, and my education in the novitiate and otherwise in the spirit and practice of the said company, and thereby am much enabled (if the faults be not in myself) to proceed with more fruit and facility towards my own perfection and helping to the perfection of my neighbour.

Being moved with these just reasons, and greatly desirous in our Lord that this work of God in me and others may be brought to the ripeness and perfection of a religious Order by the confirmation of the See Apostolic, I do therefore make *promise*, and covenant with our Chief Superior, and the rest of the whole company, that I will live and remain in the same, notwithstanding all oppositions and difficulties that may occur, and will endeavour by the practice of obedience, in perfect union and subordination

⁵ In the archives of the diocese of Westminster.

to serve the company in all occasions that I can, and never to seek to be freed from this obligation or from my vows, by Superiors, or by other means, until God grant the confirmation of our Institute, that I may renew my religious vows therein; esteeming it a great wrong to this holy company (besides my own irreparable loss) if I should attempt to dismember it of any one subject it hath brought up, and is to use in the practice of the honourable ministries we are to serve God and the Church in, to the discouragement also of others, and lessening thereby our hopes and helps towards confirmation.

And so by this, having first commended the matter to God with due consideration and desire to perform my duty to God and man, do oblige myself by this contract, inseparably on my part to the company as aforesaid, so long as the Chief Superior should think it needful to keep me, and not dismiss me, according to the tenour of the vows.

In witness whereof I have subscribed my name.

Die mensis anno dni N.N.

NOTES TO BOOK III.

Note I.—*Letter written in French at the Infanta Isabella's desire to the Bishop of St. Omer, also to the Mayor (page 275.) Translated from the manuscript among the Papiers d'Etat et de l'Audience at Brussels, Liasse, 466.*

Monsieur,—Your lordship will remember the contents of a letter which her Highness wrote a few days ago to the magistrates of St. Omer recommending certain English ladies, who having taken refuge in that town are taking care of some young ladies, in order to train and exercise them in the Catholic faith, that when they return home they may live as good Catholics, or else remaining here may become religious. And although those of the said magistracy ought to have rendered them all possible assistance, and thus encouraged them to continue so virtuous and holy an enterprise, it seems that they have failed to do so ; though I doubt not your lordship has shown it all possible favour according to the intention of her Highness, who has moved the Rev. Father Colasso of the Society of Jesus to desire that your lordship should be persuaded by a letter from me not to withdraw from it your assistance, by representing to the magistrates, not only that the town will not receive any inconvenience but rather renown from being a place of refuge and a secure asylum to a band of honourable ladies who are banished from their country for their religion. And in conformity with this, they are required to be so good as to provide the said ladies (with their money) with a house near the one in which they now live very inconveniently, and because I feel sure that your lordship will employ yourself willingly in this work of charity, I will not importune you farther on the subject, but conclude this letter by begging God to preserve you in perfect health for many years to the great consolation, my lord, of your Church. And humbly kissing your hands.

At Marimont, the first day of October, 1612.

Note II.—“*Father Lee's Practical notes for going forward in perfection.*” (page 352.)

Having cleared yourselves from all gross sins committed in the world as, morally speaking, every one ought to trust they have after a general confession made to the satisfaction of the ghostly father, which you must assure yourself you have done, when he doth not tell you to the contrary, you must know that the only step to perfection consists in the mortifiedness of your will, which commonly erreth in one of these two extremes, either in desiring too much or too little. Wherefore our first rule is to give ourself as near as you can to the true practice of obedience, which is the directest and perfectest medicine against our self-will.

2ndly. When obedience doth not particularly assign you what to do, then do you what exercise you have most mind unto, only purify your intention, by any thoughts, word, or sign.

3rdly. You must only not do against obedience, but as near as you can not discourse or give way to any thoughts, that anything is better for you than that which obedience telleth you, putting by such discourses and saying, “Your holy will, O Lord be fulfilled and not mine.”

4thly. Be ever content in your minds with what you are able to do. If thoughts trouble us that it is not well say, “Have mercy, O Lord ! on all sinners and for the merits of your bitter Passion, make us such as you would have us to be.”

5thly. Be not too eager about that you take in hand, for eagerness is a cause of many faults, and so of much trouble. Against all thoughts of this kind use always the resignation of your will ; “Your holy will, O Lord ! be fulfilled and never mine, for the merits of your bitter Passion,” &c.

6thly. For your prayer, examen, and such other spiritual exercises, it is sufficient that you use the means obedience approveth, and present yourself to do that which obedience intendeth, though when you come to it you do nothing but sit still with a kind of tediousness, which is great suffering, for God Almighty's sake, sometimes endeavouring to think of somewhat according to the matter, or calling to mind some comfortable sentence of holy Scripture, and repeating that often in yourself

or resigning your will to the will of God, or beseeching Him for the merits of His Passion to make you such as He would have you. Or think of some point of our Saviour's Passion, or beholding some godly or pious picture, endeavouring to do all things as well as you can, be contented with that you can do, and never look for comfort for anything you do.

7thly. All manner of thoughts which tend to pusillanimity, as that you shall never overcome yourself, or gain perfection, resist them saying, "Alleluia," as often as they come.

8thly. When thoughts come of the spiritual enemy that your sister is better than you, or hath more grace, thank God for it and wish that for one grace, He would be pleased to give her a thousand, and inwardly chapter yourself, as indeed deserving nothing but confusion.

9thly. It is good to do ordinary penances, as telling your faults in the refectory, eating your meat on the ground, or such like ; continue them according to obedience, and be content to forbear them when obedience will. Be not solicitous in yourself whether you profit by them or not, it is sufficient that you do them with a general intention to the greater glory of God.

10thly. For afflictive penances, be content with the ordinary until you be well settled in peace of mind ; if you do them not, be not troubled, but humble yourself to God, ask help you may do them and confess your omissions of them to your ghostly father.

11thly. Never omit the doing of anything which obedience employeth you about, either for fear of not doing it well, or for thoughts of vainglory for hoping to do it well.

12thly. Be not curious to ask of strange persons new remedies, but be content in practising those you have given unto you, in doing what obedience would have you do. For the rest, &c.

Note III.—*Memorial of Mary Ward and the English Virgins to Paul V., 1616 (p. 366). Translated from the Latin copy in the Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome; "Ratio Instituti" in Anglia Hist, 1590—1615.*

SCHEME OF THE INSTITUTE.

As the sadly afflicted state of England, our native country, stands greatly in need of spiritual labourers, and as priests, both

religious and secular respectively, work assiduously as Apostles in this harvest, it seems that the female sex also in its own measure, should and can in like manner undertake something more than ordinary in this same common spiritual necessity.

And as many of our sex holily serve God in monasteries out of England, and day and night greatly advance the conversion of the kingdom by their prayers and pious works, so we also feel within ourselves the pious desire—infused into us, we trust, by God—to embrace the religious state and at the same time to devote ourselves, according to our slender capacity, to the performance of those works of Christian charity towards our neighbour, that cannot be undertaken in convents.

Wherefore, we propose to follow a mixed kind of life, such a life as we hold Christ our Lord and Master, to have taught His disciples, such a life as His Blessed Mother seems to have lived and to have left to those following her, such a life as appears to have been led by Saints Mary Magdalen, Martha, Praxedes, Pudentiana, Thecla, Cecilia, Lucy, and many other holy virgins and widows ; and this most especially in these times, in which, as in early times, the Church is sorely oppressed in our country; that by this means we may more easily instruct virgins and young girls from their earliest years in piety, Christian morals and the liberal arts, that they may afterwards, according to their respective vocations, profitably embrace either the secular or the religious state.

It is, necessary, therefore, that whoever wishes to serve God in this least family should well understand the end of this our vocation, and the proper or right means by which it may be obtained.

Our end then is, to work constantly at the perfection of our own souls under the Standard of the Cross, both by the acquirement of all virtues, by abnegation of all self-will and by diligent extirpation of self-love. Virtue, indeed, we would have so highly valued in all those who would embrace our manner of life, that anyone wanting in it is to be judged unfit for our state, no matter what may be her other talents and endowments, much more does this same want of virtue disqualify a person for the task of government, and for the discharge of any other important office in the Institute.

Besides attending to our own perfection, we desire, in the

second place, to devote ourselves with all diligence and prudent zeal to promote or procure the salvation of our neighbour, by means of the education of girls, or by any other means that are congruous to the times, or in which it is judged that we can by our labours promote the greater glory of God and, in any place, further the propagation of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church.

That we may more firmly and constantly persevere in our intention, and that both now and in future, we may be free from all suspicion of being troublesome to others, we will that, immediately after making their profession, all and each of ours shall make a vow never to seek directly or indirectly nor, as much as in them lies, to allow others to seek, nor to admit if, unknown to us, it has been brought about by others, that, except the Chief Pontiff to whom alone we humbly beg to be subject, any religious order whatsoever, or any person whatsoever, or any bishop or anyone else appointed by the Pope to visit us, should have us so committed to his charge as to exercise over us authority, power, or jurisdiction.

In order to attain our end, it is moreover necessary, for various and urgent important causes and for needs of our Institute in these times, and it also seems to be for the greater glory of God, whether we regard the good of our own souls or that of our neighbour, that this our least and most unworthy Congregation should be allowed, with the approbation or permission of the Apostolic See, to begin and exercise its duties without inclosure, as otherwise our Institute and method of life can neither be observed nor practised with any hope of obtaining the fruit that we propose to draw from it.

But our dress should be such as may present to externs a model of Christian gravity and modesty and all other religious virtues, inasmuch as regard should always be had to poverty, cleanliness, and religious decency ; the style of dress should, for the most part, be conformed to that generally worn by virtuous ladies in those countries or provinces where ours happen to live or reside. Always keeping in view those things that pertain to greater perfection, ours will never admit of the use of anything whatever that savours of the least worldliness or vanity, but always have before their eyes the greater glory of God and the common good.

Although, as regards external mortifications our manner of life may appear only ordinary, since no one is, by the Institute, obliged to observe strict inclosure, or to wear a determined religious habit, or to perform external penances and austerities ; there will nevertheless be a provision or clause in our constitutions, prescribing to each one the exercise of many virtues and the use of certain solid mortifications, and in their practice subjecting each one to the discretion of the Superior in such manner that we hope nothing either evidently necessary or useful will in this respect be found wanting, whether we consider our own spiritual progress, the instruction or edification of our neighbour, or the attainment of the end and object we have proposed to ourselves.

It is moreover necessary that all of ours should know, on entering on this manner of life, that they are not called to a life in which they can devote themselves only to themselves ; but that, having Divine love alone in view, they are to prepare themselves to undertake any labour whatsoever in the education and instruction of virgins and young girls ; in the first place, by instructing them generally in their duties towards God, that is to say, in those things to the knowledge of which all Christians are bound, moving all by example and by prayer to embrace the Catholic faith with the utmost zeal. Secondly, all those, among whom ours labour, are to be especially recommended to approach the Holy Sacraments frequently, to recite the Divine Office, and to be present at sermons ; they are also to be taught the method of mental prayer and examen of conscience, and they are likewise to be trained to the use of other spiritual exercises, according to each one's attraction and capacity. With all diligence and charity, they are in like manner to be assisted and encouraged to enter those religious orders to which they seem to be called by God. Yet as all are not so happy as to be called to the religious state, the virgins who have not this vocation are to be no less carefully instructed in the manners and virtues necessary to a praiseworthy Christian life in the world. Always and everywhere keeping in view the greater glory of God, each one of ours should be ready to perform, according to the commands of holy obedience, any works whatever of charity and humility.

We further deem it necessary in the Lord that, not only

during the time of probation but also ever afterwards, this our Congregation should have the power of dismissing persons who are either unfitted for the end we have in view, or who are in any way troublesome or seditious. This measure seems to be highly expedient, that by its means our Congregation may preserve its primitive spirit in purity and vigour ; for those only we consider fitted for our Society who, drawn purely by zeal for the greater glory of God, humbly beg to be admitted into the number of ours ; as with us there are no prisons in which the unruly may be punished, nor are there any afflictive penances by which they may be corrected ; for each one will choose only those penances which seem to her, with the advice or permission of the Superior, necessary to her spiritual progress. We judge it most fitting, therefore, to dismiss as soon as possible, those whom we have ascertained to be unadapted to our manner of life, lest their bad example should prove prejudicial to others ; from this resolution we shall, by no means whatsoever, allow ourselves to be dissuaded, for the sake both of the common good of our Congregation and of the particular good of those who are dismissed. By such dismissal no injury is done to the persons sent away, for this regulation shall be fully signified to them before they are received among ours, and under this law and condition they enter our Society.

This our Congregation comprises four degrees of persons, viz., the Novices, the Associates or Assistants, the Mistresses, and the Professed. The term of novitiate ordinarily lasts two years, during which time the Mistress who has charge of the novices should take the utmost care that they are exercised in solid virtues, and rightly instructed in the practice of prayer, that they become active lovers of solid mortification and true enemies of self-will and self-love.

If, at the close of the two years' probation, they persevere in their desire to continue and progress in the way upon which they have entered, and if in all that relates to manners and progress, they have during their probation given satisfaction to our Chief Superior, they take the three essential vows of religion—poverty, chastity, and obedience—according to the form of life prescribed in the Constitutions. These vows are not, however, solemn but simple, unless for some special cause and in an exceptional case, anyone is at once admitted to profession, or to

[blank in MS.] The term of novitiate ceases when the vows are made, and those who have taken them are thereby incorporated in our Congregation, becoming either Mistresses or Temporal Assistants ; and, on their part, they remain bound to this rule of life for so long as it shall seem good to our Superior to keep them, and they are not dismissed.

The second degree is that of the Associates or Assistants, who are destined for domestic works and affairs ; they are also, however, bound to observe the common rules, unless, in the judgment of the Superior, they require, on account of their greater labours, some mitigation of rule and more suitable food. Care must be taken that the greatest charity is manifested towards them and that they are well cared for.

The third degree, consisting of the Mistresses, is limited to no prescribed time. Its duration is determined by the will and judgment of the Chief Superior, who, besides examining each one, either personally or by deputy, will also procure full information concerning the conduct, character, and progress of the person under examination from the testimony of those with whom she has lived. The Superior will ascertain how far she is advanced in solid virtue, with what talents she is gifted, whether she has a great contempt of self, and what proofs she has shown of abnegation of self and self-will. On all these points the Chief Superior will take care to be fully informed before promoting any of the Mistresses to the higher degree in the Congregation ; for, where true love of mortification and spiritual progress do not flourish, great talents only occasion great troubles.

All in this degree should understand that they should ever be most ready, without any choice but with all diligence and alacrity, to learn and to exercise any duty, office, or employment, to which the Superior may think fit to apply them for the greater glory of God, the common good of our Congregation, or for the service of our neighbour ; and, as far as in her lies, each one should for her greater mortification, abnegation and spiritual profit, voluntarily seek for duties or employments that are considered vile and abject, or to which she has great natural repugnance, remembering the humility of our Lord who, though He was One with His Father in Heaven and the Creator of all things, nevertheless, for the instruction of men, practised when on earth the mean and common trade of his father, Joseph. In

like manner should ours, even the nobly born, devote themselves to teach and instruct others with the same humility, without excepting anything, and having Divine love only in view, let them be ready to teach and instruct any persons of their own sex, ever regarding in their pupils the value of their immortal souls, although these pupils should be of lower or humble birth.

Let all in this degree understand that in no way, either personally or by means of others, should they endeavour, or aspire, or by any means strive, to be promoted to the degree of the Professed, but that they should leave the matter entirely in the hands of the Superior. In the meantime they must endeavour, by their virtue, their modesty, their talents, and all else that may be needful, to render themselves capable and worthy of being admitted to this degree, if the Superior should at any time advance them thereto.

Before admitting anyone to this degree the Superior will be careful that, for the space of at least six months, or, should there be an opportunity and if it be deemed expedient, for an entire year, the person to be promoted should again pass through some noviceship, and there be exercised in humble works, in religious duties and in other practices calculated to strengthen her in solid virtues, as far as it may be deemed expedient for her in our Lord.

While ours are in the degree of Mistresses, they will twice a year, according to the will of the Superior, renew their simple vows ; and that this renovation may be made with fruit and not out of mere custom, they will spend some days previously in spiritual recollection. When they have finished their probation and given due satisfaction, they will make their profession by publicly taking the three essential vows of religion, to which they will privately add certain other vows, such as : Never to make any change in the Institute ; with regard to our end, never to seek or permit any other subjection than that which has been above declared, nor any other means for the acquirement of perfection either in themselves personally, or in the education of girls, which they will always continue to vow. Some other vows referring to purity of spirit and the preservation of fervour, they will also make, as will be more particularly explained elsewhere.

Lastly, the fourth and highest degree is that of the Professed,

who, when they have made their Profession, are to be called Mothers ; whence it is evident that none are to be admitted to this degree unless they have been previously well exercised in solid virtues, and by the maturity of their manners may be held to be such. They should know moreover how to give an account of their Institute, and should be zealous observers of its statutes, and they ought to know well what perfection is, and by what means proper to the Institute it may be best acquired.

If then abnegation of self-will and judgment, joined to an increasing struggle to root out all self-love, is so necessary to all in this Congregation, much more is it requisite in those who are to be its lights and guides in virtue ; hence, in them above all we require consummate prudence, maturity and discretion, so that, besides attending to the right administration of our families or communities, they may also, with edification and profit, hold communication with externs, since our Lord not unfrequently makes use of weak instruments, that the virtue and power of His grace may be more manifest.

From among those forming the degree of the Professed, our Chief Superior is always to be chosen, also her Assistants who, after long probation and experience, should be found truly humble, prudent in Christ, illustrious for virtue, for perfect purity of life and for great fortitude,—all which they should manifest in an eminent degree, to the glory of God, and be ready to undergo difficulties and labours at the least sign of obedience.

Wherefore, if it should please the Divine Goodness that this our least Congregation should grow somewhat and increase, we hope that the Superior of each House, the person to whom is committed the care of spiritual matters, and also the person to whom is confided the chief care of the instruction of youth, will be chosen from the number of the professed ; for offices of this kind are hardly to be committed to any but to those who are well exercised, spiritual and prudent in the Lord.

After making their vows, all of this Congregation are religious as well as the Professed ; nor can they pass from this to another religious order without the permission of the Chief Superior, to whose obedience all persons of all degrees in this Society are subject ; but we hope and we humbly beg that neither the Bishop nor any one appointed to make the annual

visitation shall have over us any other authority than that of informing himself of the exact observance of the rules and the Institute, but that he may neither change nor add anything thereto, either with regard to our end or to the means by which it is to be attained.

Our Mother, Chief Superior, has power to admit persons to the several degrees and to distribute the more important offices, as for instance to nominate the Superiors of the Houses, and, if afterwards intermediate offices are appointed between them and the Chief Superior, they will all derive their authority immediately from the Chief Superior, as will also the Spiritual Mothers and the Mistresses of Novices.

Not only the Chief Superior, but all those, moreover, who are appointed to govern, should ever have before their eyes the burning charity of Christ our Lord, the profound and illimitable humility of the Blessed Virgin, and the example of all the saints, and to this model they should, as far as possible, conform themselves in all their actions. As an exercise of humility that can never be sufficiently praised, and as a means of considerably promoting discipline and religious observance, it is expedient that all the subjects of this Congregation should be bound to obey not only the Mother Chief Superior, in whose person they chiefly recognize Christ our Lord and see Him as it were present, and that they should render her all due reverence, but that they should also obey the other Superiors and intermediate officials in all things that fall under their authority. The Professed and the Mistresses shall every day recite the Office of the Roman Breviary, unless for just reasons the Superior should dispense from this duty.

With regard to chastity, it should be altogether angelical, and its transgression will incur no less a penalty than *ipso facto* an irrevocable expulsion from our Society; wherefore we lay it as strictly as possible on the souls of Superiors to be most vigilant in this matter; and even if they observe anything tending in the contrary direction, let them immediately notify it to the Chief Superior, and omit the use of none of those things that are prescribed as remedies.

All should be fervent in the practice of religious poverty, which consists in merely using things without having any propriety over them. Therefore they can consider nothing as their

own, nor can they, without leave from the Superior, take anything for their own use, and hence all will live in common. The Noviceship houses and houses of education may have fixed incomes.

This is a brief summary of our Institute, which we have thought of offering to the approbation of the Apostolic See, humbly begging, for our own consolation, in confirmation of the manner of life we have undertaken, and in order to have the more certain direction of the Holy Spirit in our progress, that by these means the courage of those may be increased who have united with us in this way of life, in order thereby to succour our miserable and afflicted country, for the sake of which and for the salvation of souls we hope to spend our lives and fortunes, as far as the little talents God has given us may therein be exercised. In this matter we have laboured more or less for seven years in the diocese of the Most Reverend Prelate and Lord, the Lord Bishop of St. Omer, in the province of Artois, where we now number sixty persons ; others of our Society and some externs are likewise labouring in England in conjunction with us, both actually and in desire, and send here noble young virgins to be educated, and others of more mature years to be prepared for holy religion, while they save others from the jaws of the imminent death of heresy and vice ; everywhere indeed we find persons anxious to embrace our Institute, were but the state of life declared to be approved by the Apostolic See. Among these persons are many of good birth, noble family and large fortune. Good God ! what instruments will they not be in gaining souls, in bringing to the Faith their relations, connections, friends and equals, in procuring dwellings, residences and stipends for priests. Wherefore, as is said at the beginning of this paragraph, humbly prostrate at your Holiness' feet, we beg that this our Institute may be confirmed by the Holy See, crowned with the laurel wreath of religious life, or at least with the name of a pious Institute, and that by this means our labours and endeavours may be honoured and perfected.

But should the success of our project appear doubtful and its confirmation in consequence be deferred, we humbly beg that your Holiness would at least deign, by granting us your favour and approbation, to increase our present fervour and to let us hope that if we persevere in religious piety and in those

labours for the good of souls which, as we have said, we have already undertaken, we may be at least deemed religious at the hour of death, and so end our lives.

Lastly, we humbly submit ourselves to the Roman Pontiff now reigning and to his legitimate successors, humbly begging that our Holy Father and Lord, Paul V., would vouchsafe to take this our least Congregation under his guardianship and protection, and grant us those indulgences and favours, which may conduce to the consolation and progress of his servants, and which may be communicated to those who themselves share our labours, though they are not members of our body. All and each of which things we beg, having only in view (God knows) that we may better serve our God and His Spouse the Holy Catholic Church, to the everlasting honour and glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Note IV.—*Answer from the Congregation of the Council of Trent, by Cardinal Lancellotti, to the Memorial sent by Mary Ward and the English Virgins to Paul V. Translated from the Latin copy in the Nymphenburg Archives.* (p. 368.)

[DUPLICATE.]

Very Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord and Brother,—
Some Virgins of England, driven by persecution from their fatherland and assembled together by love of the Catholic religion, have lately represented to our most holy Lord, that by pious works and example of holy life, as far as Divine mercy grants, they devote themselves to the salvation of souls, and that they receive other compatriot girls rescued from the midst of the impiety of their fatherland to be instructed in learning and Christian meekness and modesty. And that they may be able to go on in their vocation and serve Almighty God more studiously, amongst other things, they have humbly asked for commendatory letters to the ecclesiastical prelates. But when His Holiness referred their petition to the Sacred Congregation of Cardinals, interpreters of the Council of Trent, the most illustrious Fathers, considering their request most just, have commanded letters to be addressed, which We do, to your Greatness that you would be pleased to undertake the chief care and pro-

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tection of the same Virgins, and to aid them when it shall be needful, no otherwise than as his pastoral solicitude now long promises, that they may be the more inflamed to religion and produce daily more abundant fruits of their labours by Divine help. And if, as we trust, it shall so happen, then the Apostolic See will also deliberate about confirming their Institute. Meanwhile your Greatness must persuade itself, if you shall afford what we have above written you will not only do a thing most pleasing to the Sacred Congregation and so to our most holy Lord, but also will have Christ the Lord, Whose interests you will be promoting, perpetually mindful of your piety and beneficence. Rome, April 10, 1616. Of your Very Illustrious and Most Reverend Greatness, the Brother,

HOR. CARDINAL LANCELLOTTI.

THE LIFE OF MARY WARD.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

PROGRESS OF THE INSTITUTE.

CHAPTER I.

The Second Filiation.

1616, 1617.

BEFORE concluding the memorial of the English Virgins to Paul the Fifth, Mary Ward tells in few words the conditions and prospects of the Institute at the time she wrote. Referring to herself and her first companions and to the original object which had drawn them together, she begs for "the approbation of the Apostolic See, for our consolation and in order to have the more certain direction of the Holy Spirit that the courage of these may be increased, who have united with us in this way of life, thereby to succour our miserable and afflicted country, for the value of which and for the salvation of souls we hope to spend our lives and fortunes. In this matter we have laboured for seven years, more or less, in the diocese of the Most Reverend Prelate and Lord, the Lord Bishop of St. Omer, where we now number sixty persons. Others of our Society and some externs are likewise labouring in England in conjunction with us, both actually and in desire, and send here noble young virgins to be educated and others of more mature years to be prepared for holy religion, while they save others from the jaws of the imminent death

of heresy and vice. Everywhere indeed we find persons anxious to embrace our Institute, were but the state of life declared to be approved by the Apostolic See. Among these persons, are many of good birth, noble family and large fortune. Good God! what instruments will they not be in gaining souls, in bringing to the Faith their relations, connexions, friends and equals, in procuring dwellings, residences, and stipends for priests."

The hopes which are here expressed by Mary were in some measure quickly realized. For no sooner had the first blessing of the Head of the Church rested on the young Institute than its effects became visible. Father Lohner says¹ that it was from the large number of those who were received into the Congregation of the English Virgins that it became necessary for the preservation of discipline that other houses should be founded. This may have been one of Mary Ward's reasons for seeking to transfer a portion of the St. Omer community elsewhere, and to make another foreign settlement, all the minds who came to her not being fitted to be sent to work in England in those perilous times. But she had besides other and as important reasons. An object doubtless very prominently before her, was to plant the good seed in other places, that it might bring forth fruit to God's glory, and that the Institute by its propagation and fruitfulness might win for itself the hoped for confirmation, and with it a place among the ranks of the Church's commissioned workers.

¹ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 82.

Barbara Ward gives a short account, in a few lines only, of the foundation of the new house. Mary had never returned to the same degree of health which she had possessed before the two severe attacks of measles which had twice brought her to the edge of the grave. The consumptive tendency which ensued after the last attack had never left her, though she had been sufficiently raised up from it to leave her bed and resume her duties. The temporary strength which had been granted her in her last visit to England, had been consumed in her many toils there as fast as she had gained it, so that she returned to St. Omer in as exhausted a state as when she left it. It cannot be doubted also that her great austerities had told upon a frame so far from naturally robust, as she herself has said, that she had from this cause doubted originally whether she were fit for conventual life. She acknowledged to others that these austerities had injured her health, and her friend and first English biographer, so often quoted, tells of her that "at the age of twenty-six she was so attenuated that the physicians judged that by the course of nature she could not live five years." With all this, it is not to be wondered at that symptoms of a confirmed consumption soon reappeared, and change of air was again necessary from the humid atmosphere of St. Omer. Barbara Ward relates that the Abbess of Gravelines, whom Mary was accustomed to visit, recommended the waters of Spa, and this falling in well with the plans Mary was forming, she was prevailed upon to proceed there in the summer of 1616.

Mary's mind was already turned towards Liège as

a suitable place for establishing the new colony she was intending to plant. Since the death of Father Roger Lee, there was no one upon whose advice and counsel she could personally depend. Her letter, in which she had so urgently entreated him to point out to her some one who should succeed him in the care of her soul, and whom she should obey in his place, had either arrived too late, or he was too ill to answer her, for we do not find that she ever made another vow of obedience such as she had made to him. From different parts of Mary's meditations subsequently, of which notes remain in her own handwriting, it would appear that she was afterwards uncertain whether it were God's will that she should bind herself in this way again. Though she loved the grace of obedience, and had practised it with great perfection, yet she saw that her vow had been a cause of great troubles both to herself and others, though God had overruled and even worked good through them. Thus she says, apparently, in the year 1619: "I will accustom myself to submit my will and judgment especially to him that hears my confession, and those of our company with whom I live at that time, so much as may stand with God's greater glory."² To this she adds in another paragraph: "This purpose I made forth of some affliction I then felt lest my will were the cause I sinned so much; and I could not find where to put it out of God, with security to myself or without danger of hindering this work. For such reasons," &c. The reasons she does not set down. Again, during the

² Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

Spiritual Exercises, she says: "*Desirous* to obey, without anxiety and no stay, but in want of security whether God would have it so or no, which found, I resign with ease and *content*. Perchance I should fail in true practice if well tried." The italics here as elsewhere in her meditations are Mary Ward's.

But though not seeking to bind herself by so strong a tie, Mary felt the necessity of the best spiritual counsel both for herself and her companions in a work becoming daily more arduous as the size of the congregation, as it might now be fairly called, increased. The Jesuit Fathers had just begun their new foundation at Liège, and Father Gerard was the Rector. These circumstances doubtless influenced Mary's choice, for not only his own great merits, but his personal friendship and high esteem for Father Lee, and his knowledge through him of all the details respecting the origin of the Institute, fitted this Father more than any other to give her the help of which she stood in need, and to undertake the spiritual direction of those who were to be united with her in the new enterprize. We do not know upon whose counsel she finally acted in deciding upon forming a settlement at Liège, but it may have been that of Father Gerard himself, his position as founder and Rector of the Jesuit College there giving him the power of either encouraging the plan or the contrary.

On the way to the Spa, where she arrived in the middle of the summer, Mary and her companions stopped at Brussels and had an interview with the Infanta, commending her new project to the kind offices of that Princess. Of this audience, Mary's

friend and travelling companion says : " In her passing by Brussels, she received singular honour and expression of affection from the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, as she formerly had and did ever on all occasions." Mary seems to have remained for a short time at Spa to drink the waters, but meantime was not idle with respect to the new foundation. The distance of Spa from Liége was not too great for the inhabitants of the latter city to take advantage of its medicinal waters for their health, thus giving Mary an opportunity to become acquainted with them and to interest them in her work and Institute. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus from Liége also laboured there. Her sister Barbara thus narrates what happened : " Some eight years after our beginning, our Chief Superior came to the country of Liége to the Spa for her health. One principal intention was to establish a house of ours at the aforesaid town of Liége before her return, which she effected in manner following. After her usual custom and wonted proceeding in such businesses, she discreetly procured some gentlewomen of the better sort in the city to entreat herself and other principal fathers (they not perceiving) for the effecting her desires."³

We cannot but trace here the force of Mary's personal and winning holiness and sweetness of character, which thus took the hearts of others, as it were by storm. For Liége was not altogether destitute of religious who undertook the education of children at this time. The Ursulines were already

³ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

there, established by Strecheus, the suffragan bishop, in 1614, at first as a lay congregation, and the Sepulchrines also had schools in their convents. They were not, however, sufficient for the wants of the city, and the inhabitants received Mary and her companions with great warmth. Within a year, Barbara Ward says, "a complete College was finished, with church and schools and what else necessary, which was in 1617." This establishment was not far from the house of the Jesuit Fathers, on one of the heights which nearly surround the picturesque city of Liège, and near the beautiful old Church of St. Martin, still one of the points of interest to visitors, and especially to the devout, though not a trace remains of the house of the Canon Thenis, in which Mary Ward and her Sisters were settled.

But though Mary thus won her way and smoothed the difficulties in her path by the charm of her own gentleness and self-abnegation, it must not be supposed that she met with no other hindrances from the characters and wills of others, and the opposition of those who misunderstood her and her work. That these followed her to Liège, is plain from some notes which she wrote down as a matter of blame concerning herself, and which are dated, "Saturday, July 9, 1616, the Spaw. Upon occasion of others' not concurrence, sadness for some hours, solicitude, lack of confidence in God, unquiet resolutions to do what I liked, succeed as it would, yet is for no vain end, but only for the glory of God and propagation of such." She was going to confession, and she adds "immediately after, quietness; that difficulty seen did not

disturb ; that thing desired was still desired, and an efficacy and readiness to effect it, but without solicitude ; things contrary disliked, but without anxiety. One is ready to do or not to do, yet indifferently resigned whatsoever happens ; one seeth the danger of adverse things, but without fear, anxiety, or trouble, a quiet confidence that God will do His will in confusion. One is free from all, and desires only one which is to love God, and here one remains free and contented : but in this one they are uncertain that they do love Him. One is not now inclined to vainglory or pride ; they see their sins, and account themselves for what they see ; they find now, with clarity much more than at other times, the truth of their ignorance and inability to conceive in what state those souls are that they call saints."

Meanwhile the approbation of ecclesiastical superiors had to be obtained. The Prince-Bishop of Liège was at this time Ferdinand, brother of Maximilian I., Elector of Bavaria. Besides the see of Liège, he presided over four other bishoprics, those of Cologne, Munster, Hildesheim, and Paderborn. He therefore resided mostly in Germany at Bonn, where his presence was needed to defend the Catholic cause against the Protestants,⁴ and he rarely visited Liège. The city was favoured, however, by long visits from the Nuncio of Lower Germany, at the present period,

⁴ The Thirty Years' War was just beginning in Germany. Ferdinand's character is thus given by a contemporaneous historian : "He was a Prince noted for his zeal for religion, his piety, his kindness towards his subjects, his clemency to his adversaries, and by his gentleness and affability towards all." He had a great love for religious congregations and encouraged their increase in his diocese.

Antonio Albergati, Bishop of Bisceglia, for the Cathedral and Collegiate Clergy and most of the religious of Liège were under the immediate jurisdiction of the Pope, who governed them by his Legate. Neither of these prelates were in the city at the time of Mary's first visit. But Mary had recourse to her old friend, Bishop Blaise, to effect what she required, desiring her Sisters at St. Omer to request a letter from him to Ferdinand in her behalf. He had known her now for many years and could speak confidently both as to her merits and that of the work under her care, which he had received every opportunity of watching and testing, and he was not sparing therefore in his commendations.

Bishop Blaise's letter⁵ was not dated until February, 1617, and only preceded by a few days his own public letter of approval of the Institute, by which he constituted its members as religious. In the first-named document he tells the Prince-Bishop how willingly he writes at the request of the English Virgins, both from their own virtues, which have won them the public esteem of the inhabitants of St. Omer, and because the Pope has lately commended them especially to his care. Also he believes it will be very pleasing to his correspondent to hear what pious guests the latter then has in his city, especially if they teach there. After mentioning his own intention to promote these schools for the good of the country, he says, that were the Prince-Bishop in Liège, his letter would be unnecessary, "for that the modesty, gravity, and religion of these Virgins,

⁵ For a translation of this letter from the original Latin, see Note I.

especially of Mrs. Ward, who presides over the rest, would sufficiently commend them."

But, notwithstanding the high reputation already attained by the Institute, Mary had still good reason to lament over "the not concurrence of some," which she writes of at Spa. From other sources we learn the same thing. The words of the apostate spies, so much employed by the Government of Elizabeth and James, who retailed evil concerning the Catholics, and invented where they could not collect any, are sometimes of use in history. For feigning themselves true children of the Church, they gained access where otherwise they would have been shut out. When truth was convenient they used it, so that by their means information has come down to us, especially in matters of personal history, which but for them would often have been lost. Of this mixed nature is a rare pamphlet called *The English Spanish Pilgrim*, printed in 1630, by James Wadsworth the spy, who thus writes of Mary Ward and her difficulties and her new house at Liège. "These three several ranks and orders aforesaid [of the Jesuits] are grown to a faction, about the Jesuitrices or wandering nuns, some allowing, some disliking them utterly. This Order of nuns began some twelve years since, by the means of Mistress Mary Ward and Mistress Twitty, two English gentlewomen, who observe the Ignatian habit, and go clad very like to the Jesuits, in this only differing from other nuns.⁶ They walk

⁶ The dress of Mary Ward and her companions during the early years of the Institute, will be seen in the portrait of the former from the original oil painting in the Convent of the English Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Augsburg, which forms the frontispiece of the

abroad in the world and preach the Gospel to their sex in England and elsewhere. The first that induced this Order of nuns was Father Gerard, then Rector of the English College at Liège, Father Flacke and Father Moore assisting him therein, but others oppugned them, as Fathers Singleton, Benefield [Bedingsfeld, generally called Father Silesdon], and Flood [Floyd], refusing to give the *ite prædicate*, but rather adjudging them to a retired and monastical life, whereupon there hath risen no small variance amongst them."⁷ The last named Father was perhaps Father Henry Floyd, who was for a year at St. Omer, and during many years in England. From another source⁸ we learn that "Father John Floyd," his brother, who was both at St. Omer and Louvain, and also "F. Gibbons," a learned and eminent Father, preacher for some time at St. Omer's College, and "Father Flacke, with others before and since the death of Father Lee, encouraged and exhorted the said company by sermons and otherwise."

But though the members of the Society of Jesus had always differed amongst themselves, concerning the new Institute, it does not appear that the General of the Society had hitherto discouraged those who supported it. In the autumn of the year 1616, on the contrary, and while therefore the new house of the Institute was in progress at Liège, he wrote, upon the request which must have been forwarded to him present volume. The name of Twitty is probably an *alias* used by one of Mary's companions.

⁷ P. 30.

⁸ From an old manuscript to be quoted further, in its place, entitled, "Godfather's information about the Jesuitesses," in the Archives of the diocese of Westminster.

thence, to one of the Fathers in England, to use his good offices for the payment of the dowry of one of the English Virgins. Both the act itself as well as the words of his letter show his approval of their work and way of life. The following is translated from an old copy of the letter, which is in Latin.

Reverend Father in Christ,—Pax Christi,—Mrs. Mary Ward hopes that her purpose wherein she is striving to obtain the dowry of a certain person, who lives among the English Virgins, from her relations, may be much assisted by the charity and zeal of your Reverence. If this be so, I signify to your Reverence by these, that you will supply a great office of charity, if you will effect that the dowry which the relatives would have given to the Virgin if she had married, they would now give to her, as she has embraced a pious kind of life in which she has dedicated herself and all she has to the Divine service for procuring the salvation of souls. For I trust that that will not be less pleasing to God, and even more advantageous to the public good ; and so that the assistance to be rendered in this business by your Reverence will be abundantly rewarded by the Divine Majesty. For the rest I commend myself to the Holy Sacrifices and prayers of your Reverence. Rome, October 11, 1616.

Your Reverence's servant in Christ,

MUTIUS VITELLESCHI.

A few notes remain in Mary Ward's hand,⁹ written during her retreat of 1616. The month is not stated, but having made the annual retreat just before All Saints of the preceding year, it is natural to conclude that the present one was made at Liège, and therefore with Father Gerard. The lowly opinion she

⁹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

entertained of herself may be seen by the following sentences. "Twenty times a day come as it were within a hair breadth of falling both into great and lesser sins, yet by God's mere goodness and providence brought back as it were to my former state without hurt. This compels a more evident dependency upon God, without Whom it seems one should not stand one moment ; all confidence in oneself is gone were a soul never so proud before, and when I hear of any one who commits great sins in the world, I instantly am forced to fly to God, for without He will help, it seems nothing can hinder me from doing the like. That sentence is almost continually in my mind, especially upon the sight or hearing of any one's falls, that 'no man living,' &c. I wonder not at others' falls, but the greater they are, the more I admire God's goodness to me, looking back upon my many fore-passed doings." On the back of the page is written : "O my Lord, how liberal are You and how rich are they to whom You will vouchsafe to be a friend.

"I confessed now daily, when either my confessor could come to me, or my health would permit me to go to the Fathers' College, or that my confessor had occasion to come to our house."

Thus did Mary give back to God the praise for the marked success which had again attended her undertaking. Her skill and wisdom in carrying it on are told in these few words : "After she had settled this house at Liège, where she did so dispose and order all things in schools and church as the town acknowledged great obligation, and the clergy

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vouchsafed to say they learned to do more exactly their functions and duty—thus settled as is said, she went again into England."

CHAPTER II.

In England and at St. Omer.

1617.

MARY WARD'S introductory lines to the scattered fragments which form the autobiography of her early years,¹ enable us to fix an approximate date for her next journey to England.

I.H.S.

I was commanded three or four years since by my confessor, Father Roger Lee, of the holy Society of Jesus, unto whom I had on my part vowed obedience, to set down in writing all that I could remember or call to mind of my life past, but through sloth and the difficulty I conceived in finding fit words for what I would express, I neglected to do it. Two years after (or thereabouts), which happened to be some few days before he blessedly departed this life, he gave me a more absolute charge to do it, and that before my going to England, or any other place where my life or liberty might be endangered, and that I should leave it sealed up with our company here when I was to undertake any such journey. Since this last command it is more than a twelvemonth, and I am now of necessity to go for England, and therefore dare no longer defer it. Jesus, give me grace to set it down truly as it passed. This St.

¹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

Emerantiana her day [January 23] upon which I began to live in this world, and am now of age thirty-three, in the year of our Lord 1617.

Mary must here mean, entering her thirty-third year, for her sister Barbara, writing in February, 1619, says distinctly: "Our Reverend Mother, the Chief Superior and founder of our Order, hath thirty-four years, of which she hath spent in religion thirteen." Mary proceeds:

I beseech all those (even for our Lord's love) that shall read these my faults, and the goodness of God towards me notwithstanding my unworthiness, that they judge not of anything here according to their own affections, but determine of all as the truth is; distinguishing the great and true difference betwixt God's preventing graces, His unmeasurable goodness, and the means afforded me to be wholly His, and my continual falls, unspeakable negligence, and imperfect concurrence with all such His favours; so shall you do justice, giving God what is His due, me my deserts. O all-seeing Goodness, the lover of truth and worker of justice, O Verity itself, preserve them from errors, rectify their judgments, perfect their knowledge, endue them with true——

Here the manuscript breaks off suddenly, as in many of the other loose papers upon which these fragments are written. They were evidently begun at Liège, from the date Mary gives, for Bishop Blaise in his letter to Prince Ferdinand, written February 2, speaks of her being there. They bear the marks of being composed by her in the midst of a press of other occupations, such as her position, and the work of founding a house in a strange place, must have

brought upon her. Interrupted or called away, the paper was pushed aside, and at the next leisure moment, when the necessity of fulfilling her task presented itself to her mind, if the few folded half-sheets were not at hand, another scrap was taken, perhaps to be left unfinished in the same manner. If she completed the narration beyond her sixteenth year, the manuscript, like those concerning the three subsequent foundations of which such scanty information remains, may have perished with the rest in the iron chest which Mary Cramlington so feelingly mourns over.

The "necessity" which Mary names of her going to England was partly perhaps occasioned by the pecuniary difficulties which about this time began to make themselves felt, consequent upon the delay in the payment of the dowries of the more newly arrived among her numerous companions. The fact of the Institute not being acknowledged by the Church, and the doubt, therefore, as to its permanency, had become a plea with relatives for withholding their money, and we shall find that Mary and those with her had frequently to suffer the straits of poverty from this cause. She hoped by her presence in England to allay the fears of their friends, and to prevail upon them to supply for these pressing needs. She had now not only Paul the Fifth's gracious answer through Cardinal Lancellotti to urge, but also Bishop Blaise's Pastoral, which must have been published while Mary was still in Liège.

In this letter,² dated Feb. 10, 1617, the Bishop

² See Note II. for the translation of this letter from the Latin.

announces to "all the faithful" that the mode of living of the noble Virgins of England in his city, has so much pleased His Holiness and the Sacred Congregation, that they have commanded him to help them with all the assistance he can, and that the Pope has further granted to them peculiar indulgences out of the treasure of the Church. What these indulgences were is not on record. In obedience to this command the Bishop takes them unto his protection, "that, whilst it shall be deliberated in the usual manner about the confirmation of this their Institute by the Apostolic See (which is promised us in the said letters from the City), these pious Virgins themselves and all others may know that they enjoy the same favours, privileges, and protection from the Apostolic See, as rising religious orders before their confirmation are wont to enjoy."

These approving words from authorities so exalted could not but give strength and confidence to her friends in England, and Mary anxiously desired to carry the good news among them. Barbara Ward gives the reason which was outwardly assigned to critics and others for her journey on this occasion, and gives another besides, which was probably the truest of all. Continuing her history of the Liège foundation, she says "that being settled, she went into England under pretence of health, but the true cause was zeal and desire of gaining souls, which, assisted by God, she did in such plentiful manner as will be hereafter declared, whilst during her stay in those parts." Mary crossed then to England some time in the spring or early summer of 1617. It is

narrated³ of one of her numerous voyages to and fro, that "as she was once crossing the sea a fearful storm came on, and from the visible danger of death all the persons in the ship were filled with the greatest terror. Mary alone remained of good courage, and comforted them with the promise that nothing would happen to them, which soon came to pass, for with her usual confidence she threw an *Agnus Dei* into the sea, and it became completely calm."

On her arrival she at once joined in all the labours and dangers of her Sisters on the mission, as the results show which before long ensued. The proceedings of the English Virgins in their native country, however prudently and quietly they conducted their affairs, were attended with too much success to remain any longer hidden from the persecuting powers. Mary Ward's house was a shelter for Catholic priests and a centre of operations carried on for the conversion and relief of ignorant and oppressed souls. It can only be a matter of surprise that its inmates had been left at their work for so many years, with comparatively little molestation. Mary's fresh successes upon her reappearance in England brought matters to a point. These mischievous women were to be put to silence, and their disloyal and treasonable doings stopped, and the more effectually to perform this, Mary was made herself the chief object of attack and pursuit.

"Though all this passed," says Winefrid, "with what discretion possibly she could, to the end she and hers might continue this good work of charity,

³ *Gottseliges Leben*, &c. Father Tobias Lohner, S.J. p. 253.

and not be discovered by the persecutors of our holy faith, yet was there information given to N.N. (George Abbot), then Bishop of Canterbury, of the great progress of the much evil (as they termed it) she and hers did. It was necessary, then, to hinder it, and for this effect he commanded that they should make all diligence to seize her, insomuch as a particular search was appointed for her, and, that she might not escape them, he had published a precise description of her person; and, to make the better appear the enormity of her crime, the Bishop said that our Mother alone 'did more harm than six Jesuits.'" Or, as Father Dominic Bissel⁴ reports the Archbishop's words: "That woman had done more harm than many priests, and he would exchange six or seven Jesuits for her." "This command gave great astonishment to all her friends, who used all the reasons they could think of to importune her leaving the kingdom, to which it is not credible that she would have condescended, her zeal and constancy in God's service considered, but that opportunity was offered of settling a noviceship at Liège which obliged her to return there."

Mary's stay in England thus cut short, she went back *via* St. Omer, where she had not been since her departure thence to Liège, more than a year before. She arrived at an opportune moment, for the minds of the still numerous community were in a state of great disturbance and discouragement—in common phrase, they had been "upset" by a report which had unwisely been brought into them from outside. Mr.

⁴ *Life of Mary Ward*, chap. ix.

Thomas Sackville, the innocent cause of the disturbance, had lately come to St. Omer on his return from the mission to Rome, and had of course been relating the particulars of his visit there. To him we are indebted for drawing forth words full of life and energy addressed by Mary Ward to her companions. They are contained in "Three Speeches of our Reverend Mother Chief Superior made at St. Omer, having been long absent,"⁵ which tell the rest of the tale. The following are extracts:

The first. I have spoken with none of you in particular, but this which I shall say in general may serve every one in particular—that is, that you love verity. Who can love a lie, and all things are lies that are not as they are in deeds; or who can love a creature or a friend that is not as he seemeth to be.

Mr. Sackfield commending us and our course, and telling how much it was esteemed by men of judgment and amongst the Cardinals at Rome, Father Minister being by, answered, "It is true whilst they are in their first fervour, but fervour will decay, and when all is done, they are but women!"

"Mother, hath he heard the confessions often?" (Answer) "Some three weeks, when Father More was sick." So long, I promise you, he may then have some knowledge of you, but without revealing confessions, I would know what you all think he meant by this speech of his, "but women," and what "fervour" is. Fervour is a will to do good, that is, a preventing grace of God, and a gift given gratis by God, which we could not merit. It

⁵ Nymphenburg Manuscripts. They are written in the same hand, and with the same ancient spelling, as Father Lee's addresses and letters.

is true fervour doth many times grow cold, but what is the cause? Is it because we are women? No, but because we are imperfect women. There is no such difference between men and women. Therefore it is not because we are women, but, as I have said before, because we are imperfect women, and love not verity, but seek after lies. *Veritas Domini manet in æternum*—the verity of our Lord remaineth for ever. It is not *veritas hominis*, verity of men, nor verity of women, but *veritas Domini*, and this verity women may have, as well as men. If we fail, it is for want of this verity, and not because we are women.

Many ladies and others in England, so long as they had some Fathers of the Society with them, lived virtuously with great fervour and zeal in their beginnings, but after have fallen, not only into tepidity and coldness, but into atheism and other abominable errors, not fit to be spoken of. The cause of this was not because they were women, but because they placed their affections more in the esteem of those that for the present guided them than in this verity, which is only God. So when they lost them that first guided them, and had others, they lost their fervour and all, and this without any fault in their first directors, for what they did was well. Neither do I blame those who came after, for I intend to condemn none, though in the latter there might be some fault, but the cause was they sought not verity. Divers religious also, both men and women, have lost their fervour, because they have been unmindful of this preventing truth, which is a gift of God, and a sign of predestination, as you have often heard, I am sure I have, of those that are wiser than I.

Mary then proceeds to give some of the causes for the diminution of fervour, adding, that—

fervour is not placed in feelings, but in a will to do well, which women may have as well as men. There is no such

difference between men and women that women may not do great things, as we have seen by example of many saints who have done great things. And I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much. I beseech you all, for God's love, to love verity and true dependence, and not to adhere too much to the Superior, to this Father or this creature for affection, so that if they be lost all is lost. Yet affection is good and dependence, but not for affection, so that if they be lost all is lost. This is verity, to do what we have to do well. Many think it nothing to do ordinary things. But for us it is. To do ordinary things well, to keep our constitutions, and all other things that be ordinary in every office or employment, whatsoever it be, to do it well, this is for us, and this by God's grace will maintain fervour.

Heretofore we have been told by men we must believe. It is true we must, but let us be wise, and know what we are to believe and what not, and not to be made to think we can do nothing. If women were made so inferior to men in all things, why were they not exempted in all things, as they are in some? I confess wives are to be subject to their husbands, men are head of the Church, women are not to administer sacraments, nor preach in public churches, but in all other things, wherein are we so inferior to other creatures that they should term us "but women?" For what think you of this word, "but women?" but as if we were in all things inferior to some other creature which I suppose to be man! Which I dare to be bold to say is a lie; and with respect to the good Father may say it is an error.

I would to God that all men understood this verity, that women if they will be perfect, and if they would not make us believe we can do nothing, and that we are but women, we might do great matters.

There was a Father that lately came into England whom

I heard say that he would not for a thousand of worlds be a woman, because he thought a woman could not apprehend God. I answered nothing, but only smiled, although I could have answered him, by the experience I have of the contrary. I could have been sorry for his want—I mean not want of judgment—nor to condemn his judgment, for he is a man of very good judgment ; his want is in experience. It was a wise speech of the Queen of Spain, when she had brought the Teresians into some part of Spain, and much commending them, some went of curiosity to see them, and after they had seen them said they were not such as they expected. She answered : “ If you look upon them as saints you shall find them women ; but if you look upon them as women, you will find them saints.” So we may say of men, if we look upon them as prophets we shall see their imperfections, but if we look upon them as men, we shall see them far otherwise.

That you may not be deceived, you may know them by the fruits of their counsel. Those by whom you have been directed have generally been the best directors for all. For what can this profit you, to tell you you are but women, weak and able to do nothing, and that fervour will decay ? I say what does this profit you, but bring you to dejection and without hope of perfection. All are not of this opinion. Sure I am, he that this day went to Heaven for you, where he is able to do more for you than when he was here, was of another mind, as many of you can witness. He never dealt with any that he led not to God by perfection. This is all I have to say at this time, that you love verity and truth.

The reference in these latter sentences to Father Lee and the anniversary of his death shows this conference to have been held in the month either of November or December, and thus fixes the time of

Mary's return from England. The dejection into which the community had been thrown must have been considerable, the more for their respect and value for the Father whose words had been reported to them, for Mary renews the subject in the two succeeding addresses, endeavouring to raise their spirits and their courage, and to inspire them with a great reverence and value of their calling as a special gift of God. Thus she says to them in the "Third Speech:" "You are spectacles to God, angels, and men; it is certain God has looked upon you, as He never looked upon any. I say not better, nor in a greater or more excellent manner, nor with more love, for I intend not to make any comparisons. But I say as He never looked upon any; and this is certain, the angels we may believe looketh upon you and upon all other creatures, according to the will of God. Men, you know, looketh diversely upon you; all looketh upon you as beginners of a course never thought of before, marvelling what you intend and what will be the end of you. Some, thinking we are women, and aiming at greater matters than was ever thought women were capable of, they expect perhaps to see us fall, or come short in many things.

Others esteem us but women, and with a kind of emulation that we should compass and bring to pass things beyond the compass of such weak creatures as they have ever esteemed women to be, expect to see our fervour decay, and all come to nothing, ourselves to shame and confusion. Others, I am sure, looketh upon us with another conceit, expecting all the world to be bettered by

us! Now, Sisters, since God hath particularly looked upon you, calling you to this state of life, and giving you this vocation, I doubt not but some of you thirsteth greatly after the effecting of His will, and have no patience that you have profited no more.

Mary then further tells them how perfection is to be attained, and what its true knowledge and its end.

But to attain perfection, knowledge of verity is necessary, to love it and affect it. But that you may not err, I beseech you all to understand and note well, for this will be necessary for some of you, wherefore you are to seek this knowledge. Not for the content and satisfaction it bringeth, though it be exceeding great, but that which knowledge bringeth us unto, for if you seek knowledge for itself it is unprofitable, though pleasing, and a lie. Love verity, seek knowledge, not for knowledge, but for the end it bringeth you unto, which is God, then will you be happy and able to profit yourselves and others. Without it you shall never be fit for anything. Seek it for Him that is verity, the other is a lie. Remember that He be the end of all your actions, and therein you will find great satisfaction, and think all things easy and possible.

Meantime, Mary does not lose sight of the axiom with which she began, and returns again to the charge, in order the more to impress it on her hearers.

With respect to the good Father, I must needs defend this verity, the truth of which I am assured of, that fervour needs not necessarily decay because we are women. Yet I intend not to condemn him; notwithstanding this, he may have much knowledge, and perhaps he hath all other knowledge, and I have only this knowledge, and light of

this only verity, by which, perhaps, I must be saved. Therefore, I must and will ever stand for this verity, that women may be perfect, and that fervour must not necessarily decay because we are women.

Mary did not remain long in St. Omer ; but having thus quieted and strengthened the troubled minds of her Sisters there, she went to Liège, and "as soon as arrived applied herself to " arrange the new house of which possession had been given her as a novitiate. The circumstances by which she was led to adopt this plan have not come down to us. Little more is known than that the house was on the Pierreuse, another of the heights above the city, and that it did not interfere with the continuance of the establishment on Mont St. Martin, but was a second filiation from St. Omer. We further hear that Mary herself, "as if in perfect health, attended to the particular exercises of the novices."

It must have been during this visit to Liège that Mary became personally known to the Prince-Bishop, Ferdinand. He returned to the city in March, 1618, and held a synod in April, in which many decrees were passed tending to the revival of fervour in religion, and a stricter observance of discipline, both among the clergy and religious. The ecclesiastics of Liège had been for many years engaged in the arduous work of reforming their Breviary. That hitherto used had been peculiar to the diocese, but a commission had long been occupied in remodelling it according to the Roman use, though some among the clergy still opposed any change. Mary Ward had an especial love for all that concerned the fitting adorn-

ment of the church and the reverent performance of the worship of God. Nothing with her could be too bright and beautiful which was to honour our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Having been accustomed also all her life to the Roman Ritual, she ordered everything in the church of the house at Liège in accordance with it, and so exactly as to draw the attention of the Liège clergy, to whom the subject of liturgic observances was then of great interest, and to call forth their eulogiums. "They vouchsafed," says Winefrid, "to say that 'they might and did learn of her.'" The musical part of the offices of the church was also exquisitely performed, by means, doubtless, of the voices of the English Virgins who formed the choir. That the Prince-Bishop was on most friendly terms with the two communities is shown from his not unfrequently attending Divine Service or saying Mass in their church, when we are told that he preferred hearing their music to that of his own choir, "as surpassing it," as he graciously said.

CHAPTER III.

Hungerford House and Knightsbridge.

1618, 1619.

IN the midst of the engrossing and laborious occupations caused by the government of her three houses in the Low Countries, Mary Ward's thoughts still turned again to England. She had left her Sisters there in a more than usually anxious position, owing to the attempts of the Protestant Archbishop against herself, which necessitated a still greater secrecy and prudence in their movements. Every action had to be weighed and carefully guarded, lest any false step should altogether put a stop to their work for the souls of others. Mary knew, therefore, the need of wisdom and experience in whoever was at their head at such a moment, both to meet the daily exigencies which might arise, and for their own sakes to encourage them in their difficult course. Besides this, her generous soul burned to be with them at the post of danger, and could not brook the idea of leaving them alone to face the attacks of unscrupulous persecutors, which were intended to centre in herself personally. Her own risk was as dust in the balance; these considerations and the fear of having to break up their mission weighed far more, and the novitiate

at Liège "well settled, and having still before her eyes the profit that was to come by the faithful labours of ours in England, as also the necessity there was of prudence, zeal, &c., in the carriage of businesses, would herself be present, though with imminent danger of her life, which merely in nature she esteemed a slavery to be too much in love withal." She therefore determined to go back at once to London.

To prepare herself for what was before her, Mary entered upon the *Spiritual Exercises* in April, 1618, and, as may be concluded, with Father Gerard again as her director. There are short notes in her hand¹ of ten of her meditations which she made. Some of them are of a remarkable nature. In that on "Venial Sins" she says :

I found no conflict to want all that this world can afford rather than commit the least venial sin, nor could I think of anything I was willing to buy at so dear a rate. I found I was strong, and adventured to propose to myself whether I would not rather want Heaven for ever than buy it by doing the least thing that might offend God. I found that most contentedly I had rather lack that happiness for ever. I then asked whether if I must either lie in hell for all eternity, or commit the least venial sin, which I would choose. My will was resolute rather to go to hell ; but withal I found a sensible and great unwillingness to endure those afflictions and pains for ever. I was troubled to see myself thus. The conflict increased, yet my will never yielded. After some time the benefit of freewill came to my mind, and I said that since I had freewill, and by that was able to make what act I would, I there resolved rather to suffer a thousand hells than commit the least offence against

¹.Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

God. With this I was much changed, sorry for all I had committed, asked forgiveness with tears both for great and lesser (but this sorrow was not long), and begged grace never to offend Him *advisedly* again. I was sorry to think that forth of rashness, custom, and negligence, I should certainly many times offend Him. I besought Him that I might not. Amongst those motives for avoiding venial sins, these moved me most: that God was injured, that our neighbour was hurt, our souls disposed to greater sins, our mind abject, and disposition servile.

The last of the series, following those on sin, and which in an old copy in another hand is headed by Mary herself "The loneliness," is one to which she herself referred by this name on more than one occasion in after years, when the fulfilment of what God showed her in it was hanging over her. The subject of the meditation she calls "How severely God punisheth sin except we do penance."

I saw it pleased God better that I should satisfy in this life and to content Him. I besought Him earnestly to show me wherein, or by what way, He would have me make satisfaction (for He was near me). I considered that to forbear sin I had already resolved and was bound, except I would incur more need of satisfaction. There occurred that I should bear *well* all such difficulties as might happen in the doing of His will. I thought this was little, and that no great difficulty could happen, my disposition of mind and freedom considered. I therefore begged more earnestly to know the thing that He would have done, promising that whatsoever it were, I would do it. The same was before me still and nothing else. After some time I thought that that might be the same that God would have me satisfy by, and that perhaps I might find more difficulties and crosses in the passages of my life than I did imagine. I then offered

myself to suffer with love and gladness whatsoever trouble or contrariety should happen in my doing of His will, but besought Him withal, that none of those things might hinder what His will was to have done.

Presented that perchance there was some great trouble to happen about the confirmation of our course, and with this I found a great and new love to this Institute, and a near embracing or union of affection with it. I offered myself willingly to this difficulty, and besought our Lord with tears that He would give me grace to bear it, and that no contradiction might hinder His will (were His will whatsoever), *for I had then a greater love to His will in general than to any particular.* I was as though the occasion had been present. I saw there was no help nor comfort for me but to cleave fast to Him, and so I did, for He was there to help me. I besought Him that the love I felt to this course now might stead me then, when that trouble should happen, because perhaps I should not then have means or force or time to dispose myself, or to call so particularly upon Him. I begged of Him with much affection that this prayer I now made might serve as a petition for His grace at that time. I left with a solid contentment, and, as I think, desirous to serve and suffer for God ; but me thought such a thing would certainly happen.

The knowledge Mary here acquired of God's will for her, she names, in the list of graces conferred upon her already mentioned, as the fourth given by our Lord: "4. What way He would that I should satisfy for sins and negligences of my life past." Thus Almighty God prepared Mary for what was to come. Of the two sources of suffering shown to her, that which concerned the more immediate accomplishment of God's will by sufferings personal to herself, would have been the most present to her mind as

she turned her face towards England, were it not for the immense and unflinching courage with which she was by nature gifted. This courage could make her condemn and even court, rather than avoid, danger, and was so innate in her that in some depreciatory words concerning her own doings in one of the three speeches to her Sisters at St. Omer lately, she had treated the quality itself as nothing and of no merit. She says: "I desire to make you understand and believe it; for my part, all that I do, or shall do, is nothing. Verily so little and so easy that I find no difficulty in anything. I cannot think it is a great matter to speak upon occasion with princes or to whomsoever, to effect or bring to pass whatever is necessary, and verily, I confess, that if there were not God, or if I did not do what I do for Him, that which I find within myself were sufficient to make me do all I do or shall do; and indeed in that I am unsatisfied, because I know not from whence this proceedeth though I hope well."

Upon the meditation of "the loneliness," was grounded the picture of Mary in the Painted Life, which forms the twenty-eighth of the series. The inscription runs thus: "As Mary in the year 1618 bewailed her sins with many tears before God, He signified clearly to her that she should satisfy for them in this life. When she earnestly besought Him Whom she felt to be very near to her, to show her in what way it should be done, and thereupon perceived interiorly that she should endure humbly all the troubles which should come to pass in the accomplishment of His most holy will."

The same series gives further information as to her journey to England. It took place at a later date than she perhaps originally intended. She very likely stopped again at Brussels also on her way, as it is said elsewhere that she generally visited the Infanta Isabella on her journeys to and fro. According to the Painted Life, she was on the sea on St. James' Day, and in great danger, and this picture, the twenty-seventh of the set, makes known as well that this Saint was one of her especial patrons and protectors. "When Mary was on the sea on the feast of St. James in the year 1618, by invoking this holy Apostle as her particular patron, she, to her great astonishment, quieted a dangerous mutiny which had arisen in the ship; whence she afterwards acknowledged that she never sought any grace from God through the intercession of this great prince of Heaven, that she did not receive it." Whether Mary arrived safely on this occasion in London, and joined her Sisters there, without encountering further perils is not clear, for her friend and secretary, Winefrid, who appears to have been with her, in opening the account of some of the incidents of this visit to England says, that she was "taken twice in her passing the seas to and fro, and yet came off."

The year 1618—19 was one of great activity in England against Catholics, and both sexes had to bear their share of the burden. The faithful persistence of the women in Catholic families in refusing, and making no terms with, the new faith, had long been a notorious fact which drew down the especial animosity of the persecutors, and had been turned into

a new source of enriching the ever needy Sovereign and his grasping courtiers. All conforming husbands, *i.e.* who went to the Protestant church occasionally, were fined £220 a year, worth more than £850 now, "till such time as they could persuade their wives to abjure their faith," and the wife had to go to prison if the husband did not pay. A handful of women such as Mary Ward and her companions who made so successful a resistance, and at the same time brought converts to the Church, were thought worthy therefore of being watched and hunted after. And if they, much more the many valiant-hearted men who carried on the warfare between the Catholic faith and Protestantism experienced the like treatment. It was a year of heavy fines and imprisonments. The freshly stirred activity had its rise partly from the successful outbreaks of the Protestants in Germany, which led to the Thirty Years' War, and which excited the fanaticism of those in England. But it arose also in the increasing and fruitful labours of the Catholic ecclesiastics, who amounted to three or four hundred scattered over the island, illuding the attempts to seize them or stop the fulfilment of functions which sustained the fidelity and courage of their much tried flocks. There were at this time above one hundred members of the Society of Jesus in the country, and a much greater number of secular priests, many among whom, through the whole persecuting period, lived for years in the seclusion of some Catholic family concealed from all that spies and pursuivants could effect, ministering in secret to those who came to them, and saying Mass daily in the

house where they were sheltered. No wonder that the knowledge such things went on in spite of them, excited an intense irritation in such minds as those of George Abbot, and many of his fellow-bishops.

The little persecuted community of English Ladies were no longer in Spitalfields, but had to move about and adopt any dwelling which the most concealed them from observation. Mary's wisdom suggested that an open appearance of poverty both of dress and abode were not the best preservatives from the sharp, curious eyes which were always on the look out to obtain the reward consequent on her capture. She assumed another name, that of Tirell, and her companions, among whom was her sister Barbara, doubtless equally adopted this expedient, at the same time they all dressed according to their station in the world, in handsome secular dress, made after the fashion of the day. During one part of this visit of Mary's to England they lived at Hungerford House,² in the Strand, a large ancient mansion with a garden, in poor repair, belonging to the Hungerford family, who probably lent it to them temporarily. Here they resided, to the eyes of the uninitiated, like a secular family, and carried on their work for the souls of their countrywomen; when need was, going out in poor, mean clothing, or on other occasions and with the same object, in fashionable attire, like ladies accustomed to good society.

We are told of "yellow ruffs" that Mary and all wore, as the last and most "phantastical" mode

² Hungerford Market and Street now stand on the site of this mansion and its gardens.

just introduced, and Barbara Ward is said to have been "dressed in a bright taffeta gown and rich petticoats, trimmed of the newest fashion, and a deep yellow ruff." A similar practice was not infrequent with many among those engaged in the dangerous employment of helping souls, as it made them less liable to recognition. There are numerous examples of such disguises. Thus in an old printed list of priests,³ &c., written by an apostate, two are described as, "both Jesuits, lodging about Fleet Street, very rich in apparell, the one, a flaunting fellowe, useth to weare a scarlet cloak over a crimson satin sute." This gay style of dress was brought against them by their persecutors as a reproach, and Mary Ward and her companions suffered from the same imputations. The particulars just given are from an old manuscript⁴ already quoted, the work of a maligning anonymous pen in 1623, which, as if dipped in gall, attributes their actions not alone to worldly, but to evil motives, and describes Mary Ward especially as filled with pride, vanity, and arrogance, and worse.

Mary Ward's fearlessness and almost recklessness of danger is displayed by an incident which occurred probably while she and her sisters were domiciled in the Strand. She was at this time both failing in health, and worn in mind and body by her unceasing toils, but the family characteristic remained the same, strong and vigorous as ever, and ready for use at a

³ *The Foot out of the Snare.* By J. Gee, Master of Arts, &c., London, 1624.

⁴ From the Archives of the diocese of Westminster, endorsed, in an ancient hand, "Godfather's information about the Jesuitesses."

moment's notice. George Abbot, the Protestant Archbishop, whose pursuivants were endeavouring by all the means in their power to obey his mandates and seize upon her, had at the same time a great curiosity to see one of whom report had spoken marvellous things both as to herself personally and her powers of persuasion. This was reported to Mary, and she resolved to gratify him, though at the same time she must have had some private and especial object in view in seeking such an interview, such as to soften his animosity, or make him ashamed of warring against women.

"On a time," says her friend Winefrid, "tired out with mental employments and other labours," and subject to continual headaches, as we are told elsewhere, "she was importuned to take some recreation. At length yielding thereto, she found out a very unexpected one, of which no one thought, which was to give the Bishop of Canterbury his wish of seeing her as he had so much desired it, and in effect went to his house at Lambeth, with no small apprehension to her companions who were in terror and alarm at the success of this perilous amusement, but to herself a walk of pleasure and real recreation." The feelings of her companions may well be imagined as they accompanied Mary in this walk from the Strand to Lambeth Palace. Little did they reckon of the magnificence of Whitehall or the pleasant parks on the other side, with their turf and trees, or the grand old abbey towers as they approached them, or the pleasant walk by the river side and the gay craft which floated along it. The turrets of the Gatehouse,

the Archbishop's prison at Westminster, must have made them shudder as they passed, and the walls of Lambeth looked grim at them from across the water. Rather, doubtless, would they have been upset in the ferry-boat as they went over, though they were too unselfish to disturb Mary's calm cheerful pleasure in the expedition, and perhaps knew she would laugh at them for their pains. The dress and bearing of the party gained them a ready admittance to some apartment in the palace, but, says Winefrid, "God permitted that the Bishop was not at home, but she left her name, and that she had been there to see him, written in the glass window with a diamond." Let us hope that they took boat somewhere on the river for their return, for in every footstep behind them we can well believe that Mary's companions would imagine the tread of the pursuivants hurrying to overtake and secure their beloved Mother.

Through *Godfather's Information* we learn that while Mary was at Hungerford House, her brother, George Ward, was in London, and was in the habit of coming to see his sister. To her wise counsels and gentle influence he had owed it, that the thoughts of vengeance against the murderer of their brother, which had fixed themselves in a character perhaps not less generous and fearless than her own, had been quelled, and that he had been induced to direct his energies to the cultivation of his own mind. His education at the College of St. Omer, where he must have had frequent intercourse with Mary, was over. There he had learned a nobler and holier object in life than revenge, but he had not, in 1618, as yet

embraced the religious state. We may well suppose that his hopes and aspirations for the future, and the choice of a vocation which still lay before him, were the subjects of many a conversation between the brother and sister, nor can it be doubtful in which direction Mary's words and desires would lead him.

The community were not long allowed to remain in peace in the spacious old mansion. It would appear that both George Ward, named as "Mrs. Warde's owne brother⁵ now called Mr. Ingleby with others," including one of the More family, were at Hungerford House, when suddenly it was made known to them that pursuivants were at hand. "In their chiefest jollity" (though what this was the censorious writer does not state) "they had intelligence of a search to be made, and not apprehending the case, one of Sir Francis (?)⁶ Moore's, his younger son went to enquire, who found out and brought them news of the cause of the intended search,

⁵ In the Diary of the English College, Rome, there is a William Ward, who also adopted the *alias* of Ingleby, and who had studied at St. Omer, but Winefrid's words quoted above lead to the supposition that Mary had only two brothers. In the year when the manuscript speaks of her "own brother, now called Mr. Ingleby," as having been with her in London, William Ward was at Rome, by the entry in the above Diary. The latter was more likely a cousin of Mary's, as there were several branches of the Ward family in Yorkshire. Those of Bishop's Middleham, Durham, descendants of one of Sir Christopher Ward's brothers, became Protestants, and one of them was chaplain to James I., and afterwards Master of Sidney College, Cambridge.

⁶ Perhaps the pious Cresacre More, great grandson of Sir Thomas More, the martyr, who having studied for several years to become a priest, was sent for from abroad by his father, Thomas More, of Bam-boro', and induced to marry, upon the death of his eldest brother, the two next being already the one a religious, the other a priest. He was a cousin of Father Henry More, the historian, then at Liège.

whereupon they dispersed suddenlie." Upon this alarm Mary thought it better to remove into some more retired and unsuspected neighbourhood. The manuscript continues, "At Knightsbridge, an infamous place, Mrs. Warde and her companie lived with no less vanitie and riote than before at Hungerford House, and the waites, I mean the musicians, came from London to salute her night by night, and received the reward of two shillings every time." A bribe doubtless, prudently given to prevent the mischief which might accrue from reports of whatever nature, which could easily be spread concerning Mary's household. Nor was such prudence, as we shall find, unnecessary. Let us turn to an unprejudiced pen to obtain a true account of what passed after their hasty flight.

Knightsbridge was then a village, with scarcely any houses of note in it, but Mary had a friend of some name who resided there, to whom she addressed herself in their need, in spite of his being a Protestant, and with good success. His kindness brought a great blessing to himself.

Having borrowed of a special friend a garden-house near London, which yet was private and secure for her, he being a Protestant, and powerful in regard of the office he held; in this house, for some special service to the glory of God, she had much company, so as information was given and spies set to observe what passed, and finally the house beset by guards, but at distance, yet so as none could pass in or out without note, which was cause that all the company alarmed, ours in particular, begged our dearest Mother to disguise herself, and so slip away. She

answered, "No, because God's service required her staying." This was on the Saturday; all passed quietly that day and the next. The Monday morning, her business ended, she gave order to those of her company for her removal. The others thought this was no more needful, hearing no more of the bruit, not willing to quit the place unless of necessity. But this humble and faithful servant of God answered, "Hitherto I have had my good Master's warrant for my stay, His businesses requiring it, but that done, I expect not a privilege for my own respects," and so immediately departed by the public door in coach, accompanied by two other coaches, besides horses. Within half an hour the officers came, broke open the doors, searched, and seized upon all.

That this unpleasant ending to Mary's stay at Knightsbridge was not due to any treachery in her Protestant landlord, may be seen from Winefrid's further account of him.

To make a little digression [she writes] this man, though a Protestant, as I said, grew in great light and understanding of the Catholic faith, in which God gave him the grace to die, and became so great an admirer of the super-eminent qualities of our Mother, and honoured her virtues so perfectly, as he would often say with feeling, "There never was such a woman but the sacred Mother of God."

The occasion on which the large company mentioned in the manuscript was gathered together may have been some great festival of the Church, when Mary opened her house to all Catholics, to afford them an opportunity for Confession and Communion, or perhaps to give to the Jesuit Fathers on the mission a quiet place of retreat for meeting together, as they were accustomed to do in Father Garnett's time at

White Webbs, Mrs. Vaux's house, and on many other opportunities. Mary's biographer, who seems to have been present, might well say of this and other escapes: "In these great dangers and particular searches, as her confidence and free reliance on God was great, so was His fatherly protection most miraculous." A further proof of the reward she received for her unshaken trust in God, and of the reverence and even awe which her personal presence struck into the hearts of the rough *employés* of the civil magistrats and pursuivants, is also given by Mary's companion and friend, after one of her sea voyages, when she was seized and detained, but released finally.

One of these times a servant of hers, forth of the faith she had all was safe that was about this servant of God, gathered together all that she conceived might be dangerous, and gave it to her, but not with so much advisedness but that the guard saw it, and fearful that something might pass that might argue their infidelity in the execution of their commission, desired to know what the maid had given her. She answered it did not import them, but upon condition they would promise to return it to her again, they should see it, and taking out a fine crystal reliquary, showed it them, which they with great reverence and wonder beheld and returned it her, and this though a thing express against the law. [At this time Mary] was guarded so strongly as not able to be private in her own bedchamber, but her presence had such authority as seemed to command her own freedom, and their power was no more than to make apparent the limit God had given them.

She was then set free, but by what direct means we do not hear.

This occurrence may have taken place on Mary's way to Wisbeach, for another of her biographers states that she was once taken at sea, when leaving with the intention of landing again in England. She was not deterred from her intended visit to the priests in Wisbeach Castle. Many had been there before her, for it resembled a pilgrimage of devotion to visit these confessors of Christ, who were sometimes confined for years in this most wretched of State prisons, often half-starved and in need of the greatest necessities of life, yet still exercising their priestly functions in secret, to the consolation of those who came to them, and the conversion of no few. Mary's visit was made a subject of reproach and taunt in the calumnious manuscript already quoted. The writer says, "She came like a duchess to visit the Ignatian prisoners at Wisbeach, in coach, attended with pages riding with her in said coach, and two or three attendants of her own sex, and was so bountiful or rather prodigal, that she gave each keeper (who wished more such guests) an angel a piece." The manner in which Mary Ward was accustomed to prosecute her numerous and painful journeys will ere long come before the reader, and is in itself an ample refutation of the lavish expenditure and worldly pomp here laid to her door. The explanation is very simple. Mary, staying with either some Catholic or Protestant of good position in the county, for she was well acquainted with Suffolk, and had influential friends as we know, was sent to Wisbeach, attended by some of their retinue, the more easily to gain her object of admission to the prisoners. The gifts to the keepers have

an equally easy solution, intended as they doubtless were to propitiate the hard-hearted and rapacious men in that office in favour of their helpless charge.

The "Item" which follows in the manuscript on this accusation, is of a similar nature, and seems to carry on the history. "Lodging one night at a gentleman's house, she gave the chamber-maid an angel, and likewise conformable to the other officers." It did not seem to occur to the writer that a Catholic travelling in disguise, with all but a price set on her head, had a grave necessity of making friends with the underlings, even in houses where she was intimate. The motive attributed instead is brought forth in the next "Item." "She is so vainglorious that she wrote the manner of her bounty to the superiors of her society beyond the seas, who neglected not to communicate it (to her high commendation) in public recreation to all the congregation." From this last sentence we learn that Mary did not fail to keep up correspondence with her Sisters at St. Omer and Liège, and to communicate to them passages of interest or importance. In a future chapter some further extracts from *Godfather's Information* will be brought before the readers, as well as the character and motives of the unhappy person who supplied the materials to its author.

Only one of the results of Mary's personal labours during this visit to England, among those with whom she had such power to influence for good, has been recorded, though we are told that they were numerous. But this one is both remarkable and important, and her friend and ever ready sympathizer makes known

by a few very strong words, how solicitously she toiled to attain her end. "Among other blessings that God gave her labours at her being this time in England, a very particular one was the reclaiming of a priest, of a very good family, but who had so forgotten himself and his function, as he knew neither how to say Mass nor Office. But what did she not lay as the stake for this gain? Even all that had not of God's displeasure; she omitted no industry nor invention to gain him, so had she the reward to hear he ended happily."

With the usual careful omission of names and places before observed, there is no clue given in the narrative as to who this priest was, and there is only one reference in Mary Ward's manuscripts which throws any light upon the subject. In the list of graces bestowed by our Lady, which she wrote in 1624, and which she heads, "What hath been granted unworthy I by intercession to our Blessed Lady," the first stands "About Dr. Singleton." There is no further mention of his name in any of her letters or writings, and but for one witness of a later date, we should be left to mere conjecture as to his identity with the reclaimed priest. But Mary Cramlington, the collector of the traditions of the Institute, speaks undoubtingly on the subject, saying: "According to my knowledge, Dr. Singleton was that priest whom our foundress converted from wicked courses." But who Dr. Singleton was, who owed so deep a debt to Mary Ward's prayers and toils, must be left to genealogists and others to discover. That there was a good Lancashire family of that name, and more than one worthy priest who

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bore it when Mary Ward lived, is known, but the name of none whose history tallies with the above has yet come to light. The reclaimed priest died a pious death, and there is an interesting incident connected with him to be mentioned in the next chapter.

It was during Mary's stay in London that she was again favoured with a vision of a just soul, which had made so deep an impression upon her just before Father Lee's death in 1615. The subject of her meditations at the time suggests that it may have occurred on the Feast of the Holy Name, 1619, as the date is not given in the following inscription of the Painted Life, which makes this second vision known. The picture is the next in order to the mutiny on board ship on St. James's day. "God showed visibly to Mary, when she was meditating in London upon the words, *Et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum*, a just soul endowed with great brilliance, giving her clearly to understand that all those who live in this Institute conformably to their vocation will attain to a similar indescribable beauty of soul, because this state leads to inherited justice and conforms to Christ our Lord, as to a most perfect model of all virtues."

CHAPTER IV.

A Hope of Martyrdom.

1618, 1619.

AFTER reciting the account just given of the happy conversion of the backsliding priest, Mary's biographer continues: "This was the conclusion of that time's employment in England." But though it was the last of Mary's labour in the company of her Sisters, it was not to be the conclusion of her own sufferings there in the cause of God. That she should also have been the happy means of reclaiming a soul so dear to Him, "it may be supposed, much displeased the devil, as he made appear by the several troubles and impediments he caused for the passing the seas, the said priest being in her company, for having been some time on the sea was turned back by a contrary wind to the shores of England, and landed just in the officers' hands, so there was no escaping." Her friend's caution, even after the lapse of many years, allows her to give neither the date nor the name of the place where this happened, and such slender particulars, that we have nothing but a few words where detail would have been of lively interest. One fact, given for another reason, shows that Mary was brought back to London from the coast, and was taken before some

judge at once. There were three causes, Mary had often said, "for the which she desired to give her life, to wit, her faith, the honour of our Blessed Lady, and her chastity," "and was once very near the point of so doing" for the two first. Nor did she shrink back now for a moment. On her arrival in London, she was brought before the Justices in Guildhall. To arm and strengthen herself the better for what was to come, and to give plain evidence of her faith, Mary, with her usual fearlessness, wore visibly outside her dress, or perhaps had in her hands, a rosary or picture of our Lady (the former being an offence still punishable with loss of all property or perpetual imprisonment). One of the Justices, perceiving this object of devotion, uttered some blasphemy against the holy Mother of God, when Mary, "with great courage reprehended him most undauntedly for his blasphemous words," saying, "What ! a miserable man, a good for nothing wretch, is to blaspheme and revile the most holy and Divine Mother, the Queen and Lady of all creatures !"

This reproof sealed Mary's fate for the time, for "committed she was, and so far from being frightened or daunted, that she aloud, with a courageous and heavenly voice, said our Blessed Lady her litanies, as she passed in coach from the place of judgment to the prison, where arrived she knelt down and kissed the threshold of the gate, as a place sanctified by the cause for which she entered there ; and this publicly before them all in the presence of the officers who conducted her, which humanly was to incense their rage and fury against her." But Mary's composed de-

meanour and calm self-possession again struck that awe into the hearts of her guards with which Almighty God had before shielded her from them, and, "contrarywise, they seemed all her slaves. It was, without doubt, that He, Whose honour she sought, undertook her defence." We are not so far favoured as to know which of the wretched London prisons it was, the threshold of whose gates was kissed by Mary Ward, nor is it clear in what court her cause was eventually tried, though as the warrants for her capture were originally issued by George Abbot, and his pursuivants were in search of her, it is probable that her trial was finally transferred to the Archbishop's court, and that she may have been confined in the Gatehouse at Westminster.

It is not perhaps difficult to picture the sufferings of Mary's companions when the news was brought to them of the imprisonment of one, as well so dear to them, as necessary for the well-being of the whole Congregation. They could not be blind to the exceeding peril she was in, for all the charges then so commonly brought as causes of death or of long imprisonment against the Catholics, as, persuading others to embrace the faith, sheltering and assisting priests, refusing the new oath of allegiance, sending persons abroad, the use of beads, relics, &c., were plainly enough attributable to her, and with witnesses easy of procurement, as she cared little to hide her faith on any occasion. The Archbishop's bitterness against Catholics they knew well, and that his object in attacking Mary was to silence her. Once in the persecutor's power, it was unlikely she should be re-

leased. Nor could they buoy themselves up with the hope of her escape because she was a woman. Women had been hanged for their faith during this persecution, less guilty than Mary, and many there were who had died in prison, or were even then lingering in all the miseries of a long captivity. The gloomy prospect, however, but quickened their energies; they obtained access to Mary, and we cannot doubt at once made use of every means to obtain her liberty.

Meanwhile we turn anxiously to look at the prisoner herself. "Her immoveable confidence in God was without doubt the source of her divine peace of mind, which she possessed in all times and upon all occasions. During her imprisonment in England, when to others her life was in imminent danger, her greatest care was to pacify and console others whom she saw in affliction on account of the evident danger to which she was exposed." Forgetful of herself, she cheered and strengthened her Sisters and infused into them a portion of her own calm trust in Almighty God, Who was not on His part unmindful of her needs. A few sentences remain in her own hand of meditations made "At her being in England," as her copyist heads them. We may perhaps safely conclude from Mary's life of continual harass and ceaseless occupation while in her own country, that these were made and noted down in the quiet of prison days, when she could without interruption take a review of her own state of soul.

Of one of these meditations she writes: "A quiet sight of my own certain want generally in all, and

every particular virtue." During another, God seems to have comforted her in the desolation of her captivity with some sight of the joys of Heaven, and thence of the fleeting nature of all below, whether joy or pain. "Having had a little glimpse, and that in general, of the Heavens and what is there, I am ready, at least afraid, to fall into a disesteem and suddenly into a total neglect of this earth and all upon it, or that ends with time, and so to neglect and cast off as neither worthy memory nor any esteem, the businesses of this life and such as of duty is to be done." Father Lohner adds that this fear of causing thence any injury to her neighbour and to the Institute, caused her to pray that she might not be misled, but that she might perfectly know and fulfil the holy will of God. She remarks again in consequence of the same blissful vision: "Seeing the no importance of men's esteem, I am ready and cannot without diligence do otherwise than forbear, as labour to no purpose, that which should deserve well, edify, and give example." But there is no sign of trouble or fear for herself, nor any anxiety expressed concerning the Institute, at a time when she was lying with death apparently very near at hand. It may be that the light that God had given her, of His designs for the Institute, both in the vision of the just soul and in the knowledge that she was to suffer further herself in the attempt to bring about the confirmation, gave her an interior confidence of His preservation of her. Her anxieties for her companions were lessened by the blow having fallen on herself, which had until it came endangered them also.

But there was one subject of disquietude which pressed upon Mary, because the safety of a soul was involved in it, and in this Almighty God again permitted her to be comforted in a wonderful manner. These fears were for the priest whom she had so lately regained to God, lest he should fail under the temptation to which he was exposed, by his life being in danger, for he must have been seized at the same time that she was. "A certain priest, brought out of danger of losing himself eternally, by her means, which charity of hers was accomplished by her perpetual and continual care of him, daily serving his good angel, one night in particular apprehending him in more than ordinary danger, with great anxiety (which was not ordinary with her) praying for him, calling upon his good angel, presently she beheld his chamber and bed with him in it, and his Angel Guardian with an inexpressible diligence hovering over him in posture of defence, turned to her, and with a loving reprehension expressed these words: "Do you not see the care I have of him?" By what follows it may be gathered that the object of her solicitude was not only at that time preserved by the care of his Guardian Angel and Mary's prayers, but was afterwards altogether delivered from the peril he was in, for it must have been to him that she subsequently described what she had seen.

The room was so perfectly discovered to her, as she putting down what she saw, it was found to be so conformable to the reality, as there was not the placing of a stool found different. This angel seemed to her of such beauty, as she was wont to call him the "Fine Good Angel," and

the grace done her herein of high consequence. Employing about that time a painter, and willing to make the aforesaid good priest in love with his good angel, made the painter draw him by her description in his posture, &c., which had in it so great incitation to reverence and devotion, that the good old painter, then sixty years old, began to say daily a *Pater* and *Ave* to his good angel, which he had never done before.

This episode forms an interesting subject for the Painted Life, and as we see that Mary Ward herself originally employed an artist upon it, we may without improbability conclude that the existing picture, executed as it most likely was under the direction of Mary Poyntz, is a tolerably exact delineation of the priest, the room he was in, and above all of the "Fine Good Angel," such as Mary Ward saw them in her vision. The following is a translation of the accompanying inscription: "As Mary was once earnestly praying for a priest whom she had withdrawn from a bad life, in fear lest he might have met with an evil chance, God showed to her visibly his holy Guardian Angel standing at the top of his bedstead, who lovingly stretched out his arms over him, as if he would shelter him from all danger, who said to her, 'Seest thou how faithfully I guard him?'"

We have no knowledge how long Mary lay in prison. One of her biographers states that sentence of death was passed immediately and almost without a trial, and without the evidence of witnesses. Such proceedings were by no means infrequent where Catholics were concerned. Her friend Winefrid's

caution keeps her silent: she wrote in what were still dangerous days, when spies were yet at work to do injury to others, by less means than a manuscript such as hers. She says only: "Her confidence in God was not so as to refuse human helps, and did not prevent her from making use of the means which were offered her for her deliverance, which had a heavenly blessing in her favour." Neither Mary nor her companions were deficient in influential friends who had the power to mediate for her. Doubtless the Infanta would be applied to by the former, as well as relatives at home. The Spanish Ambassador had not infrequently been the means of rescuing the Catholic English from their fate, and his interest was the stronger now that "the Spanish Match" began to be spoken of. Money also, that most powerful of weapons in the times of which we write, would be freely offered by Mary's English connections. The public execution, too, of a lady of Mary Ward's position, purely for matters of religion, was a strong measure even for Archbishop Abbot's fanaticism, and carried with it a risk of public odium. But it was perhaps the pecuniary side of the question which decided the matter, and private bribes paved the way to the acceptance of a heavy fine, for which the sentence was finally exchanged. Father Adam Contzen, in the letter already quoted, says: "Mrs. Mary herself suffered imprisonment in England; sentence of death was passed upon her for religion, but there was no execution for fear of odium." Father Dominic Bissel states that "she regained her liberty by the care and diligence of her friends," and her Benedictine bio-

grapher adds, "By her friends paying down money." Mary's freedom once more obtained, "she passed happily the seas, visited ours at St. Omer, and so on to Liège."

Before following her there, a little remains to be told concerning the Institute as she left it in England. Before Mary's departure, she had appointed Susanna Rookwood as Superior. We have heard something already of what her courageous spirit could endure. Another personal trait of a different nature may be related here regarding her. It is given in the French necrological account of the early members of the Institute.¹ Among the numerous Protestants whom she brought back to the true faith was one who afterwards was seized by severe illness. Susanna nursed her through it, and was present when she received Holy Communion. Shortly afterwards the invalid was violently sick, and "it was supposed that the sacramental species of bread might still be present incorrupt, upon which Mrs. Susanna took courage and magnanimously swallowed all the sick person had brought up." A deed of Divine love like this stands in no need of human praise.

From various indications in existing manuscripts, it may be seen that the English Virgins did not confine their operations to London, but went into the country places wherever they could obtain a tolerably safe sphere for their labours. To set on foot one of these missions may have been the primary cause of Mary's last visit to Suffolk, that to Wisbeach Castle being only, as it were, by the way. This is the more

¹ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

likely from the toils and successes of one of these Sisters engaged in work in that county, which will shortly be brought before the reader. A further notification of the spread of the Institute in England, and of the number and occupations of those belonging to it, appears in the following letter from an aggrieved parent, whose daughter was desirous of entering it. The letter also tends to show that the difficulties of its members in carrying on their work were not confined to the intrigues and attacks of persecutors, and that the same divided sentiments were to be found in England, as well as abroad, among the Fathers of the Society of Jesus concerning them. The letter is in Latin among the St. Omer papers in the Brussels Archives de l'État.² The translation is as follows :

Very Reverend Father,—I am not accustomed, on account of surrounding dangers, to transact even the least business with foreign parts by letter, but since an affair of no small importance now urges me and the love which I have borne your Society, from which I have become acquainted with it, impels me to write, I incur this risk willingly so that I may serve God in your Society, and may satisfy my own conscience.

Thus stands the matter. A certain new affair is arising which excites no small difficulties amongst us here in England, and brings it about that the union of friends even amongst your members does not appear to advantage. There is a certain Congregation, or (as they themselves prefer to call it) a Society of Virgins, which for some years has been scattered through almost all this island, and which has seemed in these later times to have affected all the duties of your Society.

² Carton 29, Supplement.

In this kingdom these new Mothers, for so they wish to be called, journey hither and thither and entice and allure as many people as they can to enter upon this new work ; they especially strive to attract to their cause the Fathers of the Society who labour in this kingdom, and they have done so much that very many of the Fathers aid them by all means in their power, being allured by this appearance of good, that these Virgins will certainly be hereafter a very efficacious means for the conversion of souls. One of the Society who lived with me grieved very much that his fellows had gone forward on such a slippery road, but he to my great sorrow has been transferred to another province. Now the one who is remaining with me is striving with all his might and main to promulgate this Institute. He has besought me several times to allow the only daughter whom I have at home to be admitted to this Sodality. I refused, because these Virgins detained amongst them another female relation of mine, almost by force, and by urgent persuasions, so that I was obliged to use several artifices in order to get her back.

This Father has again besought me that these Virgins may be allowed to meet together in my house in order to be instructed by him in spiritual matters. I refused again, for these times are so dangerous to us, that even the smallest meeting of Catholics in one household is attended with the greatest peril. Besides, I seriously considered within myself, that it would be no light subject of scandal if several women, particularly unmarried, were to resort together to any priest, particularly to one of the Society, and I thought that even good people may frequently be deceived and led astray by the appearance of good.

It is taken amiss that I have refused these things, and it is said openly that I am led away by passion, nevertheless, I remember very well what Father Henry Garnett of happy memory thought in affairs of an almost similar nature, and

he without doubt knew what ought to be done under such circumstances, better than my Father Novitius.

Meantime, although I have refused these things, daily messengers run about between these women and him, and so many documents and so many letters are sent backwards and forwards, that I fear much for myself and my family. I have sought a remedy in this country, but do not obtain it. I entreat your Reverence to aid me in this difficulty, and to give such general orders that dangers of this kind may not come to pass. As for my Father (this difficulty being removed), I do not want to change him for any other; he pleases me so much in everything else and entirely satisfies me.

Besides a serious discord is noticed amongst your Fathers when they speak of or have anything to do with this new Institute of Virgins. I abstain from details. I will say this one thing openly to your Reverence, that the Society is not united, but is in parts when the affair is being talked of, and that the difference of opinions (which I much lament) is clearly discovered by the enemies of the faith, so greatly has grown the strength of this enemy of peace and concord by the said new figment.

I will not detain you any longer, earnestly beseeching your Reverence quickly to consider over this evil, lest I with some others be obliged to suffer things which would be unpleasant to me and of which as yet we have not the slightest thought. I bid your Reverence farewell, and humbly commend myself and the afflicted cause of our country to your Holy Sacrifices.

1st of June, stylo veteri, 1619.

This letter is signed only A. B., the writer's name being probably known to the Father to whom it was addressed under these initials.

CHAPTER V.

Troubles from within.

1619.

SO nearly had Mary Ward attained to the crown of martyrdom, after which she had longed in her earlier years. We are not told that she longed for it in the same way when in prison. Perhaps the will of God was dearer to her then than even the thoughts of dying for His love, or the brightest crown in Heaven. She had gone with calm confidence into prison resting on His providence, and she left it with the same quiet trust to perform His will as He should further show it to her. If she had any regrets, when once more arrived in a peaceable foreign land, that she had lost so high a grace, Almighty God again comforted her; but it seemed rather that her heart was full of thanksgiving for being permitted to risk even life itself in aiding the salvation of others. The Painted Life again bears witness to her interior life at this time. Following next to the picture of the sleeping priest and "the Fine Good Angel," we find this inscription: "God clearly showed to Mary at St. Omer, in the year 1619, as she fervently thanked Him for the grace of her calling, that to help souls to salvation is a far more excellent gift than cloistered life, yea, than martyrdom itself." This is the only

fact recorded of Mary's stay at St. Omer. Her presence was needed at Liège, and she seems, after a short visit to her Sisters, to have gone on there without delay, and to have entered, almost immediately after her arrival, upon the Spiritual Exercises, with Father Gerard as her director, in April, 1619.

Mary had more than usual need for help and guidance from God at this time, for she found troubles of a very different kind to those she had gone through so bravely in England awaiting her at Liège. The two communities were in a state of disturbance and agitation, filled "with disputes and differences," as Winefrid says, and divided into parties, some of their members, probably those who had more newly entered the Institute and did not know Mary well, ranging themselves against her government and the original form and Constitutions which she had given to the Congregation. The Rules of St. Ignatius were to be given up and those of some other Order, to which the Institute was to be annexed, substituted in their place. The originator of these disturbances was a young lay-sister, Sister Praxedes. "This young woman was daughter to a countryman of Ardennes, innocent and virtuous, but had the ill-luck to be deceived and to deceive. She had made her profession but a short time when she gave out that she had revelations from God,¹ and that she was endued with the true spirit of the Institute, and was enlightened as to what its organization was to be; whereas Mary Ward was deceived and blinded by the spirit of darkness. By those who differed from or

¹ *Gottseliges Leben.* Father T. Lohner, p. 77.

opposed Mary, Praxedes was held to be a model of perfection and holiness, and among these were some of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus who had always withheld their approval from Mary's designs. With such support Praxedes had, by her plausibility, contrived to gather around her some within the house who were discontented, as well as the new-comers, until she had a pretty numerous party on her side ready to obey her bidding. Matters had gone so far that correspondence had been entered into with some religious, whose rule of life was to be adopted.

Mary met this difficult state of things with her accustomed wisdom and humility, but at the outset this humility itself only added to her embarrassment, for she was as ready to follow the guidance of God if it were shown to another as when given to herself. Before taking any steps in the matter, she at once entered upon the Spiritual Exercises, hoping to learn in them what was God's will. The notes of her meditations remain, both in her own handwriting and copied into a book² by one of her companions, who must have followed Mary's directions in the order of these papers. For in the middle of the course, so well known as St. Ignatius' arrangement of subjects, we find the following heading and remark: "To Revd. Far. Tomson (*alias* Jhon Garrett), of whom she took now the Exercise, and in it wrote the letter following in the year 1619, at the time when Sr. Praxedes' business was about our Institute, and the manner of subordination she said ours were to have, which was wholly different to that our Mor. had understood from God,

² Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

etc." It is, perhaps, not unworthy of observation, that this note, and the appended letter which is given below, follow immediately upon the meditation on Death, one in which Mary had again received some remarkable teaching from God. She had voluntarily put the Institute back into His hands, and accepted death without attaining the confirmation so desired by her, that the whole glory might redound to Him, and herself be forgotten as useless to the work. We shall see that this was not done without a struggle, but the sacrifice was made.

I.H.S.

Of Death.

Sadness and darkness for a good space, neither desiring nor rejecting anything. Using more diligence to descend to particulars, I found a lothness to leave this Company before it were confirmed. The cause, lest those that followed might make it something else, and here (against my will) I seemed of some importance and not to be spared without prejudice to the work. This I knew to be a lie and to proceed from no good ground.

I humbled myself (though with some difficulty), confessed the power of God to do what He would have done by any (though I perceived not this any otherwise than that by faith I was bound to believe so). I begged of God to be rid of this, and sought to find reasons to make myself appear in my own sight for such as I was. And somewhat troubled, I repeated often that He could do what He would, and by whom He would, asking of myself, why not by any other as well as by me? Looking back how all in the beginning of my call to this course had passed, I saw by particulars (good for me to note at leisure, but too long to set here) how hardly and with how much ado I was brought

by God to do that little I have done; something I found by the sight of those particulars that clearly confirmed my judgment, that God's working was the beginning, middle, end, and sole cause why. That with those graces, any else would have been moved as soon and many far sooner, and that this good had no being or place in me but by the only working of His grace, which though in me, yet a different thing from *this me*, without which I would needs that this good could not stand, and which withdrawn, I should remain as before.

Then turning to God with intent to confess my own nothing, I found (that by force of will against knowledge) I would still be of importance and a needful person. Then sad, I said, what, still something in my own sight, notwithstanding all these reasons and truths to the contrary? Well, my Lord, I am contented with this want; pardon it and punish it as Thou pleasest. Coming to conclude and offering myself to God, I saw myself little and of less importance for this work. God's will and wisdom seemed great, and His power such, and of such force as strongly to effect in an instant, or with a look, whatsoever He would. And before this greatness, *the power* of all His creatures together *resisting Him*, melted away and in a moment lost its being. I turned to myself again, offering with love to leave what I loved, very desirous to die ere *this* was done, that His working in it might the more appear. Then moved not to desire anything but God's will, I inwardly said, "Neither life nor death, my God, but Thy holy will be ever done in me. What pleaseth Thee best, that do; only this, let me no more offend Thee, nor leave to do what Thou wouldst have me."

The hour seemed not half of one. I besought Him that this I now saw and did might stead me when I lay a-dying, because perchance those extremes would then make me unapt for all.

The following paragraph was added separately, and as if written at a later hour before the next meditation :

These remain still as present, and I find a great desire to die *before*, that God's glory and this deceit of my ability may the better appear ; but it seems my security and best to rest on God's will only, which I do and will for ever.

In reading these notes side by side with the letter which follows, we cannot fail to see Mary's well-grounded conviction, below the doubts which were troubling her from the assertions of Praxedes, and which her humility suggested, that Almighty God had chosen her as His instrument with respect to the Institute, though she was ready, as we shall see, to resign this conviction, for good reason shown her by those whose judgment she was bound to follow. Yet her humility had been deepened by the increasing confidence that the work was God's, and at her Communion which followed she received the suggestion as to the course she should take. The letter to Father Gerard was the result.

Rev. dear Father,—As I was to day in a sea of uncertainties, and full of fears forth of my own inability to do anything how little soever without some powerful and extraordinary help, calling to God for His, as my last and best refuge, and receiving Him to that purpose, this came to my mind to propose (whereby I found some ease without any reason why this should ease me, except I do what God would in propounding it, for it seems if this have any effect, it will be that which yet I know not). Might not Sister Praxedes set down what she had seen, with what else she can obtain of God touching that matter in form of an

Institute? What if she were bid by yourself or Father Burton to draw an Institute with as great care as she would, if she were in my place and I in another world, so as this business rested wholly upon her? She may likewise know what I had from God touching this, if that be thought fit, or would further her, which was as follows (understood as it is writ, without adding or altering one syllable). "Take the same of the Society, Father General will never permit it. Go to him." These are the words, whose worth cannot be valued, nor the good they contain too dearly bought; these gave sight where there was none, made known what God would have done, gave strength to suffer what since hath happened, assurance of what is wished for in time to come. And if ever I be worthy to do anything more about the Institute, hither I must come to draw. I could say a great deal of those words, but never all; but she will far better see what God intended by them, if she will but ask Him what He meant by them, except He, that can do all that He will, and all what He doth is well, give her some other ground to work upon.

Twice doubting what kind of subordination should be, I was sent home (I mean to your Institute) and bidden do as there was done. Some other things I have some time perceived of subordination, which is not to purpose for her. Once I think I saw a General of yours, who said nothing, but his countenance promised all concurrence with us. This was, I think, to comfort, for some of yours at that very time would needs that the General of the Society both could and would hinder such a thing, as I did believe to be God's will in us. The first I could never believe to be in power of man; for the second this sight gave confidence. The same I saw likewise in these words, "Go to him," that when the time should come neither would he have a will to hurt us, but the contrary.

What else I have had hath been in general, or generally

and in particular such an understanding of your Institute and such a nearness of affection to it, as He can only work Who alone is able to make, without my disposing or endeavours, one thing of two so far different as is your order of life and my perverse will. I do not propound this for her with desire to leave anything that lies in me undone—God forbid. I will do my best and all I can. Do in this what pleaseth you.

Your Reverence's ever,

1619.

MARY WARD.

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out in this letter Mary's extreme humility and distrust of herself. The light she had received from God concerning the Institute, the results of her ten years' work, her own experience and the convictions she had that the Rule of St. Ignatius was that best suited for the attainment of the objects in view—all this she was ready to give up to any one else, whose plan of organization bore a better stamp upon it of being God's will and meaning. To know by this means that it was His good pleasure, was to her a sufficient reason to resign the future direction of the work which had grown so rapidly under her hand. What an absence of littleness of spirit, and what singleness of heart, she shows in determining to throw all her energies into the scale to help forward both the new plan and its originator!

Meanwhile the poor victim of delusion was proceeding in her course. A slight illness had overtaken her, and while Mary was in retreat, this illness, at first of no consequence, suddenly became serious. Whether Father Gerard or Father Burton acted on Mary Ward's

suggestion we are not distinctly informed, but it appears likely that they did so, and that the matter was under discussion with Praxedes. For when her Sisters, alarmed at the physician's report, told her what he said, and urged her to take in hand the affairs of her soul, she laughed at their fears and brought up instead the comparative merits of her own and her Superior's supernatural revelations. As if that were the more important subject to her, she declared³ that if she did not recover from that illness, they might hold it as certain that she had been deceived in her opinions, and "all what she had seen or heard was false," and that, on the contrary, Mary Ward was enlightened and led by God. And so she went to rest that night. But the morning light brought the news to Mary that Sister Praxedes was a corpse.

"In these occurrences," adds Winefrid, "much passed worthy eternal memory, and our dearest Mother her glory and merits, which doubtless she now possesseth." For though Almighty God thus visibly interfered in behalf of Mary and for the clearer demonstration of His own will, her difficulties did not end with Sister Praxedes' death. The evil had become so deeply rooted, in spite of the efforts of the elder Sisters and some of those left in authority, that even such an awful manifestation of the delusion produced by Satan did not eradicate it at once. It required all Mary's wisdom and energy, as well as the irresistible force which sanctity⁹ carries with it, to restore peace and union to the troubled communities, and in effecting this we gather that some of the disaffected mem-

³ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 77. W. Wigmore's Manuscript.

bers left the Congregation or were dismissed. Father Gerard, who must have been cognizant of the chief of the occurrences which then passed, writes of the matter ten years afterwards, to one of the elders among them who had remained unshaken and faithful during the stormy time, urging it as a twofold warning for the exercise of an inflexible union among themselves, in entire confidence in and submission to Mary Ward, their true Mother.

The third and last example [he says⁴] that I will place before you, is better known to yourselves than to me, and therefore does not require any further explanation—namely, the disturbance and trouble which one member, Praxedes, caused to you all, but especially to those whom she wished to injure. In the midst of your own Society dissensions were nearly breaking forth. If such a thing could happen by means of one miserable woman, who had remained, so to speak, but one hour amongst you, who, no sooner had she been born to God in this holy vocation than she caused troubles to spring up amongst you, and that even in the face of her whom God Almighty made use of for the formation of the whole work, and whose voice and energy in quenching such an evil proved more powerful than all your united efforts could accomplish; for God's sake what evil would not your Society experience, if more of that stamp were admitted amongst you? What authority would be as powerful in resisting the mischief as your amiable and venerable Mother's was? Which of you all would be so bold in resisting such an abuse, as she who discerned the will of Him by Whose grace she holds her office? And nevertheless she was not capable of extirpating all the ill weeds without great labour and anxiety of mind.

⁴ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

Doubtless some among the younger, more devout and more docile minds, easily returned to their duty and their allegiance. But among "the ill weeds" which had to be rooted up, and with so much difficulty and suffering to Mary, may be reckoned the unworthy authoress of the particulars given in "Godfather's Information," some of which were quoted above.⁵ That manuscript is headed, "Certain observations delivered me by Mrs. Marie Allcock, the first Mother Minister of Mrs. Warde's company at Leodes (Liège), yea, the first of all who was publicly so called." The information in this document does not go beyond the date of the foundation of the house at Cologne, in the same year as the affair of Sister Praxedes. Mary Allcock appears to have been one of a very pious family.⁶ That she was among Mary Ward's earlier companions, and on terms of intimate friendship with her, may be gathered from the responsible office she held at St. Omer, the same as that she held at Liège, and from her evident knowledge of the older members of the Institute. We may perhaps conclude, from her course of action, that she was one of those of whom Father Lee wrote so anxiously in 1615, during his own and Mary's absence. The manner in which she states private facts about the time of his death, suggests to us that her unfaithfulness arose through jealousy, and she tells us herself that this unfaithfulness was nourished by

⁵ Chap. III.

⁶ Among the directions given by Winwood, March, 1615, to a spy, is the following: "Find Alcock's Nuns. Three at Graveling, one at St. Omer's, one at Brussels" (P.R.O. *Dom. James I.*, ann. 1615).

continual criticisms of Mary Ward's actions. Of this character is Item 5, among others: "When she travelleth she is extraordinary jovial, and (to the Mother Minister's grief) most lavish in expenses both at home and abroad." And the evil feelings on the affectionate mutual welcome between Mary and her companions and their scholars, and the innocent festivities on occasion of her return after some absence, ooze out in another sentence: "At her return from England, or any other place where by occasion she hath travelled, though she had not been absent above eight days, her manner was to be feasted for three days successively, the first night an extraordinary great banquet."

We can trace Mrs. Allcock as still at St. Omer, in 1617, and present when Mary held the Conferences with her Sisters on her return from England, by the concluding words of the last Item of the manuscript, where Mary's expressions are quoted, and mischievously turned to another meaning, saying that "she would often affirm that His Holiness would place them in divers monasteries, to reform other religious orders, and therefore it behoved them to take courage and show themselves more than women." It was perhaps at that time that Mrs. Allcock accompanied Mary to the novitiate house, the new foundation which she was about to make at Liège. Here her discontent and rancour might easily lead her to join in the support of any one who was undermining Mary's influence and authority, and the weight, which the office she held gave her, must greatly have assisted Sister Praxedes. Her adherence to the dis-

contented party is betrayed by her own words concerning Mary's letters from England to her companions, which were read aloud at recreation, it is stated "some applauded, others in silence thought she wasted more than her own."

So long a course of secret unfaithfulness and jealousy could result in nothing short of confirmed animosity, little likely to be cured even by such a warning as the sudden death of Sister Praxedes. To Mary Ward, the discovery of a foe in one she had esteemed as a friend must have caused great suffering. To return to her duty after openly taking part against her Superior, was probably impossible to a mind so hardened as Mary Allcock's must have been, especially as her final removal from the conspicuous office she held must have been a measure necessary to restore peace and order, though not perhaps taken immediately by Mary until other means were vain. We hear no more of Mrs. Allcock until 1623, when the manuscript was written. Mary's unbounded charity towards those who left or opposed her prevents any reference to her in her letters or manuscripts. The only sentence in which she is mentioned occurs in a letter of Mary's to Winefrid Wigmore in September, 1627.⁷ "Grace is soon lost. Poor Mary Allcock! Mother Elisabeth (Cotton) will tell you she is dead, and how she died." We have, however, no distinct information about her death.

Mary had still some portion of her retreat to finish before taking her difficult work in hand. It was a time of great grace to her soul, and some knowledge

⁷ Nymphenburg Manuscripts.

is gained of what passed by the notes which she has left, which she seems to have taken down for the use of her companions, who had asked them of her. A sight was given her in these meditations of spiritual things, very different, as she remarks herself, from the knowledge obtained by hearing, or being herself cognizant of them before. "God was present," is a usual beginning of these notes ; once she adds, "but not as present to me," as if to mark a difference in her perception of His nearness. In one when instead of this presence she had "many distractions, nor could I find Him," she says, "I offered my whole soul, beseeching Him to please Himself of what He liked. After many more distractions, I offered myself again most willing to suffer this lack of knowledge and love for ever, if I were sure that so it were His will. It was objected that if I should not understand that it were pleasing to Him, and yet it should continue—how then? I thought then notwithstanding I would be pleased with it; present answer was made, that this was the right way. *For to be pleased with it, was to please Him by it.* This seemed a general and infallible rule, whereby always to suffer with gain, for so much as concerned the pain of suffering, though sometimes the cause might be sin, with which we should never have league." After another she says: "I begged the conversion of an old French lady, obstinate and ready to be banished (from God), showing Him those pains I had lately seen" (in her meditation on Hell), "and with compassion besought Him she might not be there for ever, promising if this took effect not to assume anything," (offering all

the merit of her actions for her), "He should have all whence all comes."

During these exercises a more perfect separation of herself in spirit from all earthly things was bestowed upon her, which she writes of herself, "so as they had no part in me, nor I in them, insomuch as I reflected several times whether this might not be a sign that my time of leaving this world and all in it drew near." This gift is described in the inscription to the thirty-first picture of the Painted Life of which it forms the subject. "As Mary, in the year 1619, meditated upon the calling of the Apostles, she saw they had no resting-place in any of the things of this world, and stood perfectly at the command of their Divine Master, out of which knowledge a new desire arose in her of attaining to a perfect renunciation of them, and she suddenly found herself in a pleasurable freedom and estrangement from all earthly things, and entirely dead to the world and all creatures."

CHAPTER VI.

Life at the Novitiate at Liège.

1619, 1620.

MARY passed the remainder of the year 1619 at Liège composing the agitated minds of the communities and following their religious rule with them. Meantime, she had, though for other reasons, to delay a further plan which was opening out before her. No sooner had she arrived at Liège in the spring than the Prince-Bishop Ferdinand at once solicited her to extend the benefits she was conferring on the Liégeois in the education of their children to another of his dioceses, and to found a house in Cologne. This project had probably been already mooted before Mary's return, and only waited for her well-skilled hand to shape it and bring it into being. Ferdinand had seen with a pleased eye the results of the labours of the English Virgins, the high favour in which they stood with the inhabitants of the city, and the holy lives they were leading. He was no stranger in their house when resident at Liège the previous year. Besides his frequent private visits to say Mass in their church, one of the occasions on which he had made them a more public visit of ceremony called forth Mrs. Mary Allcock's animadversions, by the efforts undertaken to do him fitting honour, which were due

doubtless to the purses of Mary's rich Liégeois friends, though Mrs. Allcock is ready with another criticism. "*Item* 16. Mrs. Warde entertained the Prince of Liège with a very costly delicate banquet, the room being not only perfumed but well nigh washed over with precious sweet waters ; and in the middle stood a counterfeit green tree of silk, devised with many curious conceits. One was, if any one would gently shake it, it would presently sprinkle the standers by with sweet waters. The value of this conceit and banquet (by Mother Minister's estimation) amounted to the sum of a hundred pounds at least."

The people of Cologne were as anxious to possess a convent of English Virgins as their Archbishop, and after a time a house was obtained and offered to Mary to begin the new work. She was not able, however, to enter upon its occupation for another six months. Barbara Ward gives us the reason of this delay, saying: "At her return" (from England) "she was invited by the Prince of those parts to have a house at Cullen (Cologne), which afterwards he provided, half a year before her going, which time of stay was on her part for want of money." Difficulties arising from this cause were among Mary's trials at this time, caused in a great measure by the non-payment of the English dowries and annual pensions. Her rich supporters at Liège probably little knew the straits to which the religious whom they so much valued were reduced, by the failure of remittances from England. On one occasion at St. Omer during these years their difficulties became public, by some tradesman, less merciful, or less able to wait for his

money than others, threatening to put an execution in the house. The Bishop and magistrates of the town paid the debt, but the occurrence was largely made use of against them by their enemies, and is mentioned by Trumbull the English Ambassador at Brussels, who heard of it from his spies, in his letters to England.

While poverty kept her still at Liège, Mary was directing her other Flemish and English houses both in person and by letter, animating all her Sisters by her own example, and receiving from Almighty God the strength and teaching which she imparted to others. The people of Liège resorted much to her, drawn by the singular fascination of her manners and speech, but also by her solid virtues. That she did not discourage such intercourse we find from the following resolution made among others during this year. "I will sometimes visit such abroad as either for their own benefit or the good of our community, God's greater glory seems so to require." From several of these resolutions it appears with what care and diligence she applied herself at this period to all the minute observances of the house and to the ordinary rule of the day, such as meditation, examen, spiritual reading, hearing sermons, recreation, &c., and it must be remembered that her exactness in these observances was maintained amid all the business, letters, visitors, and other cares which her position as head of the Congregation entailed, besides the individual attention she was ever ready to give to each of its members. Her practice was, as the resolutions show, to spend an hour daily in mental

prayer, and to make confession and communicate also every day. When unable to hear Mass, she made a half-hour's preparation for Communion instead. She ends the resolution with: "Especially a longing desire in every action that God be pleased in that particular. And above all (as God hath admonished) I will bear *well* all such difficulties as shall happen in doing of His will. Jesus, say Amen."

A collection of short spiritual instructions given by Mary Ward to her Sisters, many of which would have been composed during the intervals of quiet community life, was obtained by Father Lohner from the English Virgins about the end of the seventeenth century. They are inserted by him in her biography as belonging to the earlier period of her history. A few are selected in this place, as illustrative of Mary's mind, and also of the spirit which she endeavoured to implant in her early companions. They are divided into three parts, "How we are to conduct ourselves towards God, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves."

Among the first Mary says :

It very ill becomes a religious person to be faint-hearted, for she knows well that God is omnipotent, Who can turn all to her profit, and that He loves her infinitely, and, therefore will permit nothing which could hurt her.

The true children of this Company shall accustom themselves to act not out of fear, but solely from love, because they are called by God to a vocation of love.

A troubled dejected spirit will never love God perfectly, nor do much good to His honour.

Whoever would work much good in this Congregation

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must have an entire mistrust in herself and great confidence in God. Prize thy honour higher than thy life, but esteem it little to lose both for the love of Jesus Christ.

We ought to work and suffer for God, and for the rest let Him make use of us, according to His good pleasure, for the fulfilment of His most Holy will should be our sole wish and only desire.

Desire not the least thing which is contrary to God and thy conscience, under the pretext and in the hope of attaining a great good.

Be ashamed to say that anything appears hard to thee in the service of God, for to those who love all is light.

Satisfy thyself with nothing which is less than God.

Divine love is like fire, which will not let itself be shut up, for it is impossible to love God and not to labour to extend His honour.

Show thyself at all times glad and joyful, for Almighty God loves a cheerful giver.

Mistrust in God ties as it were His hands, so that He cannot bestow upon us His blessing and His Divine gifts.

Care not for what concerns thine own person, but stand up zealously for whatever touches God and His honour.

Prize thy calling highly and love it before all others, since the Eternal Truth has said in the Gospel, that he who keeps and teaches the Commandments shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Whoever will serve God according to her state in this Institute must of necessity love the Cross, and be ready to suffer much for Christ's sake.

Concerning "our neighbours" and "ourselves," Mary teaches—

Be all things to all men, that so thou mayest win all for God, and be careful as much as thou canst to satisfy all.

Make use of gentle and kind words when thou reprovest any one, for thou wilt thus effect more than through those which are harsh and overbearing.

Love all men, but love them not on thine own account, but for God.

Ours shall most diligently be on their guard that they never speak of the defects of other people, and especially not of those of religious. They shall also not complain of one another, but preserve charity indissolubly as the peculiar virtue of our company.

Do not easily be offended at the doings of others, since thou canst not know what is their intention ; but accustom thyself to put a good construction on all thou seest and hearest.

Although the conversion of souls is very pleasing to God, yet He loves the perfection of each one so greatly, that He wills not that any one should commit even the smallest sin, were the whole world to be converted thereby.

Take away from no one what he loves, unless thou givest him instead something he loves still better.

Ours ought to be endowed with the zeal of Apostles and the recollection of spirit of hermits, to attend at the same time to both their own and their neighbour's salvation.

It is a greater grace to help to save souls than oneself to suffer martyrdom.

Do good, and do it well.

Wherever thou findest thyself, remember that not the place, but the practices sanctify.

Whatever falls to thee to do, that perform as much as thou canst faithfully and diligently, but be not too careful as to how it may turn out, nor whether it will be hazardous or not, but commit it to the good God.

Let nothing disturb the peace of thy heart, not even thy sins.

As a thirsty man eagerly swallows whatever he receives

to drink ; so a thirster after perfection drinks in with joy every admonition, be it sweet or bitter.

In our calling, a cheerful mind, a good understanding, and a great desire after virtue are necessary, but of all three a cheerful mind is the most so.

There are also notes of a Conference with the Sisters which appears to have been held at this time, containing short plain directions for examen, confession, and communion. Mary especially commends to them "Father Burton's manner of hearing Mass as the best." To this time also belongs the following entry among her notes, under the heading, "What I find and am drawn to practice."

Towards God. To have no will nor interest in anything but His. To do this I am drawn almost in every occasion and alteration both contentful and sufferable. I do this easily, desirously, because that I have chosen and love the best, quietly, yet awake and not in jest.

After businesses I go (with fear to have assumed something) to find myself in God, without any will, or private interest, and with a will only to have His will : which I cease not till I find, especially in that particular wherein I then feared to have lost it.

Once having done my endeavour thus to perfect a good work newly done, kissing the picture of our Blessed Lady and her Son for a conclusion, I suddenly *understood with light and certainty* that I was to labour thus some little time, but that after that short space God would give me what now I sought, *without my labour*. I know not what passed for a time, but when I had freedom I found myself unwilling to want that occasion of sufferance or labour whereby to purify my soul and actions in His sight, which unwillingness I saw God was not *pleased* with. (1) There seemed to want in me that desire which must go

before such a gift; (2) and that esteem of the benefit which the love of God to my soul in that deserved. After this perceived and plainly felt, make what acts I could against these two, they had no effect; but I was sent away, as though it were meant that by this withdrawing I would the better remember that even in that desire of suffering lay (though unseen) my own will.

After, I would have seen particularly what this gift was (which seemed such a simple and certain good), but either it was the freedom from self-interest, and rest in God and His will (which I sought) with greater perfection than I either did or knew how to seek it, or else with these some other good which I saw not. For there seemed to be some perfection in this intended gift which I did not perfectly understand.

This occurrence was perhaps the forerunner of another, mentioned in the inscription on the thirty-second picture of the Painted Life, of which it forms the subject. "As Mary in the year 1619 experienced a reluctance in herself to live without sufferings and contrarieties, because she believed that her soul was purer and her works more pleasing to God through them, He clearly showed her, when she set this before Him in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, that such a reluctance was not pleasing to Him, as in the desire to suffer her own will lay hidden, from which He would have her entirely stripped. On which account she gave up herself wholly to Him to receive all without a choice from His hand."

In October of this year Mary again undertook the Spiritual Exercises in company with the rest of the community at Liège. During these Exercises great graces were granted to her, some of which have been

recorded either by herself or the pens of others. God Himself was rewarding her for the toils and dangers of the preceding year, and for the anxieties and distresses which had succeeded them, and through the results of which she was even still passing. He had conferred upon her manifestly the gift of a higher degree of prayer than she had hitherto enjoyed habitually. She describes it before entering on the Spiritual Exercises as then ordinary with her. "Because God is with me, and I have freedom to speak to Him and to ask of Him all I would have or know, I cannot spend my time in discourse,¹ nor content myself with what I could find by discourse, nor fasten upon nor be satisfied with anything but what I see then, and find by the effects to come immediately from Him.

"I reflect on my matter; I see without labour the substance of what discourse could show; lay what I am about before God, and spend the rest of my time in importuning Him to know or have what that meditation exacts of me or leads me to." Contemplation rather than meditation was, in short, her usual way of approaching God. She says again: "I am not so much moved to pray as called to see."

But there were during the Exercises several occasions besides on which she received remarkable spiritual favours. Three of these among others may especially be named. The first she mentions was during the opening meditation, the subject being,

¹ Mary Ward here uses the word "discourse," as it is frequently employed in *The Spiritual Conflict* and other old English devotional works, to express the acts of the understanding in meditation.

"Many are called," &c., when a sight of the pains of Hell was permitted to her, and the multitudes of lost souls suffering there. The Painted Life gives this description of her meditation. "God clearly showed to Mary at her meditation at Liège, in the year 1619, the large number of the damned, and how few are saved, and gave her to discern that the only cause of their damnation was the want of cooperation with those impulses to good which He had bestowed upon them, through which they could have attained eternal life, seeing that it is freewill alone which causes the flames of Hell to burn." Mary adds: "I cried to God to know whether ever I had thus left Him, and so chosen anything in His place. I durst not look narrowly, lest I should find myself guilty of that which once to have seen would have brought me to nothing. I left sorrowful, because uncertain whether or no."

On another occasion, when meditating on "humility, comparing us with God," she thus writes:

He was very near me and within me, *which I never perceived Him to be before*. I was moved to ask Him with great confidence and humility what I came to know—to wit, *what He was*. I said, "My God, what art Thou?" I saw Him evidently and very clearly go into my heart, and by little and little hide Himself (and there I perceive Him to be still in the same manner, my meditation being ended almost an hour since). I endeavoured to go forward according to the points of meditation, but could not. He held my heart, I could not work.

I would then have asked Him something, bid Him welcome, but He would not let me.

I was once a saying, "Will you lie there and do nothing?" And another time, "Make that heart perfect and such as you would have it;" but beginning my speech (in both) I could not possibly go forward. I saw plainly that His only will was that I should neither work nor talk, but hold my peace in all. I was weary with kneeling (having nothing to do); sitting down, this idleness of all powers made me like to sleep.

I would fain have walked, but durst not without leave. I composed myself handsomely, to attend on such a Guest, but God would have none of either.

My body was weary, and yet I did nothing; my mind, quiet and much contented; all noise, or other thing that at other times helpeth devotion, seemed then unpleasing.

An hour was gone in the space of one quarter. I left unwillingly, remaining still in the same disposition. My different affections to myself.

The above meditation is pictured in the Painted Life, which also supplies the exact date when it took place. "As Mary was in spiritual solitude on the 10th of October, 1619, and in meditation asked of God with fervour, humility, and great confidence what He was, she saw Him plainly go into her heart, and received that knowledge which she had desired from Him." In another meditation Mary gives the account of the third of those graces, which she names in the list, before quoted, as having received specially from our Lady and calls "A sight of chastity as a pure gift of God." It is dated here, "October 12, 1619, in the Exercise." This was apparently the second Sunday in October, and one of the feasts of our Blessed Lady.

I saw suddenly and very clearly that the gift of chastity (whether it were ingrafted in nature, or the contrary prevented by grace and the knowledge of true goods, or vanquished by victory and the conquest of many combats) was always a peculiar gift of God, and not conjoined to the nature of flesh and blood, though endued with reason, or in the power of man (thus corrupted) either to bring forth or conserve in himself.

I saw withal (more perfectly) in the Bosom of God the wonderful *love* from whence and the which always accompanies this Divine gift, into whatsoever soul it is infused. Then I acknowledged what I had of this to be wholly His gift. I thanked Him for it, and asked pardon for thinking it in any part my own, or in my own ability to get or keep.

I thanked our Blessed Lady, whom I thought to be a great cause of this favour, both by reason of the *day*, and in that I had for many months before begged daily of her, that she would obtain I might be preserved from all impurity.

Mary concludes by a very remarkable acknowledgment, which seems to have slipped almost undesignedly from her pen : "And I never fail of what I ask, or can ask her absolutely." That Mary was a highly-favoured servant of the Mother of God, we cannot doubt, as there will be good reason to note on many future occasions. One other spiritual favour has specially to be named, which was granted to Mary during this residence at Liège, a period which, after the restoration of tranquillity to the community there, she must have looked back upon as one of the most peaceful of her religious life. The Painted Life alone bears testimony to this occurrence, and points out at the same time her habit of frequenting the old Church

of St. Martin for devotion. A very large and ancient crucifix still exists there, which may be the crucifix here mentioned, though it is no longer in the same part of the church. "In the year 1619, God clearly showed to Mary, before the crucifix in the choir of St. Martin's Church, Liège, that although the Institute was not to be wholly subject to the Society of Jesus, yet it must necessarily be directed by them, that it might be preserved in the true spirit, and in no way turn aside from it."

Yet with spiritual gifts thus plentifully showered upon her, Mary's humility and self-knowledge increased in equal measure. Of this nature are the following entries among others in her notes: "I had a short imperfect sight of the excellent estate of a soul wholly God's; that such only truly love, are strong and apt for all such good works as are in this world to be done. What is there in me, that causeth so great an unlikeness betwixt such a soul as this and *mine*?"

Again, she reckons among her faults what was rather the contrary. "Faults in me. 1. A will long grounded in my own choice and opinion, not to have rappes (*sic*), extacies, &c. 2. That though I would not commit sin or forbear to do my duty for love to any creature, yet that friends should suffer, die, &c., would, I fear, much disquiet me. 3. Very far from contempt of myself, a great lover of myself yet, and I fear of my own will. Whence my desire of often confession comes? *Love to myself*, because sin sensibly burdens. What else wants? *Love to God*, whereby I would be as careful not to commit them, with desire to perfect the first and get the second."

CHAPTER VII.

Cologne and Treves.

1620, 1621.

THE year 1619 seems to have closed without Mary's being able to leave Liège, but in 1620 she proceeded to Cologne, having, partly through Father Gerard's help, raised money, by means of which she left her two houses there free from difficulty, and took with her a sum sufficient to commence the new work, until local funds should be placed at her disposal. Among the different facts given by Mrs. Allcock, she relates that Mary was accustomed to start her new foundations with ready money sufficient to maintain them for two or three months. This was all that could be done in their urgent state of poverty, and after that time the religious were dependent on the revenues provided for them in the cities where they had been invited to reside. By the ignorance or thoughtlessness of their new benefactors, they were often, in consequence, in great need with regard to their own personal necessities and maintenance, though their work flourished and bore abundant fruit. In June, 1620, Mary had an attack of illness, as we find from notes of meditations made shortly afterwards.

The two foundations at Cologne and Treves occu-

pied Mary Ward fully during the years 1620 and 1621. Little is known of their early history, and Winefrid Wigmore throws no light upon it, passing quickly over the subject in these few words. "Occasion was offered of beginning a house at Cologne and Treves, which took up all her (Mary's) time until St. Luke his day, 18th of October, 1621." The house at Treves was founded, as we learn elsewhere, with the approbation of the Archbishop of the city and the Papal Nuncio Albergati, to whom Mary was recommended not only by the bishops who befriended her, but also from Rome. Albergati united also with the Prince-Bishop Ferdinand in forwarding the foundation at Cologne. He was residing at this time at the ancient and beautiful Benedictine Abbey of St. Maximin close to Treves, afterwards destroyed during the war.

It was here that Mary must have become personally known to the Legate, and that she addressed to him, probably by his own desire, the account of the Institute, in the letter which has been largely quoted. The copy¹ is without date, but is inserted in the manuscript book, which usually retains a correct arrangement as to chronology, directly after some meditations of Mary's in June, 1620. In summing up the history of the Institute to the time when she was then writing, Mary says in conclusion: "The continual light God gives in little and great appertaining to the true practice of this Institute is such as cannot easily be declared. And the progress of so many souls as are now of this company, if your

¹ *Nymphenburg Papers*. It is headed, "Written to be given to the Nuntio Apostolico of Lower Germany, Mgr. Albergati."

Illustrissime knew the particulars of their proceeding, so as some other less instructed" (tied)² "might recount them, together with the miraculous calls of several of them, it would manifestly appear that God's hand were in the work, and that His Majesty is well pleased with the manner hitherto observed, which is no other than what in this other paper I humbly here present. And beg for the merits of Christ's Passion your Illustrissime will approve, if so in our Lord it seems to you convenient."

It may safely be concluded that the paper Mary mentions here was the same as the memorial presented to Paul V. which contained so lucid an account of the Institute and its objects.

The care with which Mary Ward drew up her letter for the Papal Legate Albergati is indicative of the arduous undertaking then before her mind—one far more weighty than that of merely obtaining the sanction of the Prelate to found a house of the Institute at Treves. Of that sanction she must already have been tolerably secure from the patronage he had extended to the house at Cologne. She now sought his favour and good offices for a different purpose. The troubles which had been raised in the community at Liège must have deeply impressed upon her, as well as upon those whose judgment she followed, the necessity of obtaining speedily the further confirmation from the Holy See, which the words of Paul the Fifth through Cardinal Lancellotti had led them confidently to expect. Such confirmation was the one effectual remedy against the introduction of inno-

² As known privately.

vations and changes in the spirit of the Congregation which had already threatened little short of ruin to the whole body. But we shall see in future chapters that there were other and important reasons besides, urging Mary to this course, and that if from within troubles might at any time arise fatal to the existence of the Institute, there were also impending dangers without. Opposing and even maligning tongues were ready, if they had not yet done so, to undermine and destroy the favour with which the Institute had hitherto been regarded at the Papal Court. Mary was well aware of the fact from various sources.

We are in ignorance from whom the suggestion originally arose that Mary Ward should be her own pleader before the Sovereign Pontiff. It is in keeping with all that we know of her to suppose that she was herself its author. Her confidential friend lets us know that she had formed the intention immediately after the troubles concerning Sister Praxedes, for she says, after alluding to that affair, "Her design now was for Rome, Pope Paul yet living, who had given approbation above said, with promise of a confirmation," and she then mentions the two new foundations as the cause of the delay. Upon the wisdom of that delay it is very easy to argue at this distance of time. At the moment the choice must have been difficult, for at that time it was still a new and almost unheard of thing for a woman to go and plead the cause of her own work before the Head of the Church. Mary Ward was one among the first who led the way where many have followed on the now well-beaten track. Very different was it two hundred and fifty

years ago for a woman to go on foot alone across Europe, into a strange country, to be her own champion, and to ask for privileges, never yet conceded to any of her sex, before the whole Sacred College, and, in the nineteenth century, to take a pleasant railroad trip to receive the kind smile and fatherly welcome with which the homage of many a female petitioner has for long been received within the walls of the Vatican. It is no wonder if Mary lingered to obtain the additional support which the patronage of two such eminent ecclesiastics as the Nuncio and the Archbishop of Treves would afford her, and to gain the increased importance which would accrue to the Congregation by the foundation of two prosperous houses.

No doubt these considerations were matter of grave thought to Mary, while on the other hand she remembered the uncertainty of life, and the importance of reaching Rome before death closed that of Paul the Fifth, the father and friend of so many religious works. The first-named arguments, however, prevailed, or perhaps rather another and overmastering reason turned the scale, and left her no choice between the two, namely, the want of money. However economically she might and did travel, ready money was needful for the journey from Flanders to Rome, and, as we have heard, Mary had none. Meanwhile the blow fell which she had foreseen, and which had such weighty results upon the future of the Institute. Paul the Fifth died early in 1621, and was succeeded in the Pontificate by Gregory the Fifteenth, already grown old and in feeble health.

Mary's undertaking, in spite of this event, was only delayed, and by no means given up, and she made the most of her time by gathering together all the exterior aids likely to make it successful. While thus occupied the Providence of God brought one within her reach which, without doubt, must have been eminently useful in obtaining for her easy access and a favourable hearing from more than one influential personage in the Papal Court.

The great servant of God, Father Domenico di Gesù Maria, the Discalced Carmelite, the fame of whose saintly life and miracles was spread all over Europe, so much so that all the Catholic Sovereigns vied with each other in seeking for the privilege of receiving him at their Courts, visited Treves and Cologne during Mary Ward's residence in those cities. Father Domenico was sent, after the victory of the Austrians and Bavarians at Prague in 1620,³ over the Palatine, James I.'s son-in-law—the glory of which was universally attributed to him—on an embassy from the Pope to Lorraine, Flanders, and France. He was taken dangerously ill, and obliged to stop at Treves, in June, 1621, for more than nine days. He went on thence to Cologne, where the enthusiasm of the people with regard to him was so great that the door of his cell had to be taken off the hinges, the more readily to admit the concourse that filled the house and room day and night. The Elector Ferdinand had a long private interview with him in the monastery, receiving absolution and Communion at his hands.

Among his other wonderful gifts, Father Domenico

³ See Note III.

possessed that of the knowledge of the interior state of souls, whether good or bad, so much so that, in his old age, the sight of sin which this gave him often weakened his bodily strength and made him ill. We shall see what he thence knew of Mary Ward. It is not recorded at what time she first became acquainted with this holy man, but it can scarcely be doubted that she took advantage of his presence at Treves and Cologne to seek his counsel on affairs of so great importance as those which occupied her at this time. She could not be ignorant of the immense influence he possessed at Rome, where it was said that Pope Gregory refused him nothing he asked, and, like Paul the Fifth and afterwards Urban the Eighth, would scarcely part with him from the city, and where the Cardinals, one, and all, esteemed him as a saint, and consulted him on their most private affairs. It may have been by his advice and promise of help that Mary finally acted in starting on her journey, for we find that Father Domenico arrived again in Rome about the same time with herself, and that she was very soon in frequent communication with him there. His miraculous power of prophecy was exercised in regard to Mary and the English Virgins, as Winefrid Wigmore relates in speaking of the friendship which existed between these two holy souls.

Winefrid writes :

She [Mary] would say many times, God had regard to redress her wants by moving holy servants of His to love her, but others concluded that like loved their like. Father Dominicus of Jesus Maria, that great and noted servant of God, a Discalced Carmelite, had her in high veneration,

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and would oftentimes tell us we must not be so ungrateful as to let her example pass without note, not only for our own, but others their profit. He would also often tell us how much she and hers must suffer, and would use these very words, "That we must be trampled on, and have that dependence on God Almighty, like as the little crows left by the old ones, because not feathered like themselves," and would present us the example of our Saviour's Flight into Egypt. Blessed be the hand from whence all comes ! How true have we found both the one and the other !

How often indeed must these words have been recalled to the hearts of Mary and her spiritual children in after years ! Father Domenico went from Cologne to Brussels, and was in time to receive the dying confession of the pious Archduke Albert, who expired almost immediately after his arrival. Isabella, who had known the holy father in her youth in Spain, when he was already reputed as a saint, placed herself again under his direction, and henceforth corresponded with him by letter, asking his advice on all matters of importance. That she spoke of Mary Ward to him is not unlikely, for the former was at that time in frequent communication with the Archduchess concerning the affairs of the Institute. Father Lohner says that she helped Mary with part of the funds for the two foundations at Treves and Cologne.

These two foundations raised the high reputation in which Mary already stood for the wisdom and solidity of her plans, not only in designing them, but also in her way of carrying them out. Father Lohner says Mary "not only established the houses for the congregation, but provided them with rules and other

needful things, and so arranged all concerning them, as to delight every one, and her wisdom and foresight were held in high admiration. She remained a short time in each of them, and performed all the exercises of the novices with as much fervour and edification as if she had just entered the novitiate herself."

We next find Mary at Brussels on St. Luke's day, 1621, taking leave of the Infanta before starting on her long and venturesome journey. Isabella, from the moment of her husband's death, had put on the brown habit, veil, and cord of the Third Order of St. Francis, and was at first accustomed to wear them even at Court receptions, the English Ambassador Trumbull mentioning having thus been received in audience by her. She afterwards, to please others, contented herself with wearing them only in her private apartments. Doubtless it was in her beloved habit of religion that Mary Ward was permitted to converse with her on this occasion. Isabella treated her as a friend, and entering into the particulars of her journey, would not allow her to leave Brussels until she was provided with all that could secure her a favourable reception at Rome. Mary must for some time have been in correspondence with the Infanta on the subject, for among the letters of recommendation which Isabella gave her were two, from the King of Spain her brother, and from the Emperor Ferdinand. Isabella wrote also with her own hand to Gregory the Fifteenth.

There was a slight delay before Mary's departure, caused by another mark of the Infanta's thoughtful kindness towards her. It was not until the time

arrived for setting out on her journey that the perilous nature of Mary's intended undertaking presented itself vividly before Isabella's mind. "At her taking leave," says Winefrid, who was evidently present, "the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, who had given so many proofs of her love and esteem for her, entreated her not to go to Rome in her own clothes, for such was the malice borne her, as her life would be insecure." Perhaps a vision rose up before the Archduchess of Mary Ward murdered by means of some of the numerous English spies who were to be found in almost every considerable town of Europe, who might think the deed not unacceptable to their persecuting Archbishop. Any way, five religious women, travelling with a scanty enough escort, and recognizable as such by their dress, were an easy prey for the evil-minded in the unsettled state of many of the districts of Lower Germany and among the Protestants of Switzerland. The thought terrified the kind heart of the Infanta, when the happy idea presented itself that they should be clad as pilgrims, a garb still ensuring protection and respect even in those days of declining religion. It can well be believed that no such fears entered the mind of Mary Ward. "The servant of God," continues her biographer, "could not much apprehend this and was far above these fears, but forth of her humility, to be thought as others needy of human and ordinary helps, put on a pilgrim's habit."

Three days afterwards, "on St. Ursula her day, the 21st of October, she began this her journey, in

her pilgrim's attire, with four companions, a maid, a priest, a gentleman and a serving-man, two horses, one to carry the baggage and another to ease who should be weary." These four companions belonged to the Institute, her secretary, Winefrid, being one of them. Another was Mary's sister, Barbara, who proved a most valuable and efficient fellow-traveller. Of the other two, Mrs. Margaret Horde comes before us for the first time as one of the English Virgins, but we shall find her hereafter a faithful and much-trusted companion of Mary's, accompanying her on other journeys, and often acting as her secretary in Winefrid's absence. Her exact parentage is unknown, but she was doubtless one of a good Catholic family of that name, who appear in the lists of recusants of the reigns of Elizabeth and James, as suffering imprisonment and loss of property for the faith. Mary's fourth companion on this journey we may well believe to have been her inseparable friend, Mary Poyntz.²

² The pilgrim-hats, worn by Mary Ward and one of her companions on this journey, made of some kind of beaver or felt, high-crowned, with broad brims for protection from the sun, are still preserved as precious remembrances in the Convent of the English Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Alt-ötting, Bavaria. They were brought there about 1809, with other things belonging to Mary Ward, from the first house founded by her in Munich, which was closed at the secularization of all religious orders by Joseph the Second.

CHAPTER VIII.

From Brussels to Rome.

1621.

THERE are two others of the party of travellers who each demand a separate notice, for they were friends both of Mary Ward and of the first members of the Institute, whose worth was shown by acts of friendship rarely to be met with, and this through a long series of years, as much in adversity as in prosperity. The priest, whose name Winefrid omits, was, as it appears from other sources of information, the Rev. Henry Lee, a nephew of Father Roger Lee. From the year 1621, when we hear of him for the first time as connected with Mary Ward's undertakings, he attached himself to her service, accompanying her and her companions, as their chaplain, on most of her arduous and painful journeys. There are occasional notices of him, as we shall see, in Mary's letters ; and besides these there is among the Nymphenburg Papers, the original of an interesting letter addressed to him by Father John Gerard at Munich in 1627. As the contents of this letter related chiefly to affairs of the Institute, it passed into the possession of the nuns. In it Father Gerard, who writes under the signature "John Tomson," after speaking of his own constant friendship towards the Sisters, says,

"And yourself, who have been their faithful friend and assistant, I doubt not but you have gained a great place with God for your constant charity and patience therein, it being no small matter to concur to the raising of such a company, wherein the only glory of God and good of souls is sought, and for these two greatest ends, not only to do but to suffer with them, what is it else but to be a partaker in like proportion both of their merits and rewards? This is my opinion of you, and according to this is my good will unto you, and this happiness I am persuaded your uncle's [Father Roger Lee] prayers in Heaven, and your chief friend's [Mary Ward, as the conclusion of the letter shows] merits, who is yet on earth, hath obtained for you. And according to this, I beseech you, to measure my regard for you, both past and to come, although I do not express it in letters."

A still more remarkable history has to be related of the "gentleman" mentioned by Winefrid on this occasion. Under what *alias*¹ he travelled, and afterwards resided in Rome and elsewhere, is uncertain. His real family name and circumstances were not known to the world at large, nor indeed to any one except Mary herself and some very few of her companions, until his death. From the time of the expedition now under consideration, he also, like Henry Lee attached himself to Mary Ward's service and accompanied her on her journeys in Italy and to other parts. There is every reason to believe that he was the son of one of Mary's two uncles, the con-

¹ It was perhaps that of Lennard Morriss, who is mentioned in Mary Ward's letters as travelling elsewhere with the Sisters, taking messages, &c.

spirators in the Gunpowder Plot. In a list² of Secretary Winwood's handwriting, of "English scholars in foreign seminaries, September, 1617," is this entry: "Two Wrights, sons of Gunpowder Treason."

From this residence abroad, Robert Wright, for such was his real name, would have had many opportunities of learning that deep reverence for Mary's character which induced him to plan and carry out a design with which Almighty God had inspired him. Still very young, for by his age when he died he was not yet twenty years old, he determined, says one of Mary's early biographers, to abandon all thoughts of his country in order to serve Almighty God in a state of abjection. Perceiving in Mary Ward a great fear and love of God, he resolved that he would not leave her, and, to carry out his plan, would from a gentleman become her man-servant. He attended upon her everywhere as a lackey, but so effectually disguised that no one knew who he was. He journeyed with her wherever she went up to the time of her death, and afterwards looked upon Mary Poyntz as his mistress in her place, accompanying the latter to Augsburg when she founded the convent there. He then performed the duties of a lackey to Mary Poyntz and the others; according to the fashion of those days, he went with them to church and carried their books, &c. He had a little room in their house out at the gates (among those now used for the out-of-door servants of the house, men and women), and performed the most menial work, cutting wood, lighting fires, &c. Once the saying got abroad that Robert was a person

² P.R.O. *Dom. James I.* 1617.

of distinction, and his sister, or perhaps rather his cousin, the heiress of Plowland, who married the head of the Crathornes of Crathorne, a rich lady. But he turned a deaf ear to all this, and kept himself concealed in the best way he could, seeking diligently to be despised and derided, and very often obtaining what he desired.

At last, when he became very old, they wished to take care of him in a hospital, but he would not go, asking them earnestly to have patience with him for a little time, adding that he would not be any burden to them when he was ill, for he said, "I shall one day be ill in the morning, and in the evening a corpse." A few years afterwards what he had said came to pass, and, on December 9, 1683, he very quietly and suddenly died immediately after making his confession, and when the bystanders thought he was saying his penance. His age was not exactly known, but he was supposed to be about eighty. After his death others became aware of his austere way of life, for it appeared that he never either summer or winter went to bed. His name and family also were discovered upon some confraternity and other papers. He was so devoted to prayer, that whatever were his occupations he always appeared to be praying. He lived as much as possible in solitude, and even in the coldest winter time would not go into a room or into the porter's lodge, in order to avoid company.

In this, Mary's first journey with these two invaluable friends, Henry Lee and Robert Wright, she would not allow the latter to be overburdened, but took with her also, an ordinary man-servant to attend

to the horses and baggage, and besides this, as a help to her other companions, a maid, or rather lay-sister, to act in case of illness or other accidents. With so remarkable a party of pedestrian travellers before us, we naturally feel desirous to learn something of their way of proceeding, and here happily Mary's friend and biographer, who could speak from personal knowledge, is more lengthy in details than is usually her wont. Winefrid thus gives once for all the daily order of march upon Mary Ward's frequent journeys.

What she observed in her journeys was thus. When determined, next to our Blessed Lady and her good Angel, she commended it to some saint her patron, as also to the saint or protector of the place whither her journey tended. When begun, at first setting out, said our Blessed Lady's Litanies, all answering, then the *Itinerarium* in the same manner, then to each of the following a *Pater* and *Ave*: her and her companions' own good Angel, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, the Angel of her voyages, and the "Fine Good Angel," the two saints above named, St. Joseph, St. Ignatius, and St. Anne, then made her hour of prayer. When done, she recreated herself with some profitable and cheerful discourse; if there were seculars with her of quality, she applied it to their capacities. If occasion of rocks, falling of waters, and other things, high pine trees, meadows, or pleasant brooks, she would dilate herself in admiration of God Almighty, His power, providence, wisdom, and goodness. What had of melancholy and solitary, suited exceedingly with her disposition. Sometimes she would complain that such things distracted in her prayer and meditation, such content and recreation she found in them.

If she had time and opportunity she did always eat before she set forth, and that was always provided over-

night. At noon, she nor her companions never made any meal, but her servants she was careful should. In the afternoon she took time for her devotions, saying her beads, &c. Near the place where she was to lodge she said the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for her preservation that day, a *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*, &c., for the graces bestowed on the saints to whose protection she had commended herself. When arrived and in her chamber, she sought out some picture, before which kneeling down, she made an offer of herself and all her actions to be done in that place to the greatest honour and glory of God. When order was given for supper, and linen had for the beds, &c., she had a saint's life read, that of the day, if there were any, if not some other, and for this end carried always with her the Saints' Lives and Roman Martyrology, which was also daily read. The time of meal she took occasion to say something that might edify and profit those of the inn that waited. She was careful to spare their labours, and that things should be left in the manner as they were found, which did so much edify and oblige them, as they not only remained slaves to her, but it was enough for those who belonged to her to have relation to her, passing the ways she had, to find all duty and service. Which was the same in effect with coachmen, vetturini, &c., amongst whom there was none so wicked whom with her prudence and goodness she did not overcome.

Father Lohner, in writing for the members of the Institute of the same century, says, in concluding the above account, that all Mary Ward's future children, when about to make a journey, may fittingly thus be addressed : " Look and make it after this pattern." But in truth it was a pilgrimage of the olden days, and not such as those of the present time in any respect. It was certainly made "on foot" for so

Winefrid Wigmore speaks of it, when mentioning this journey at a later date. Besides, what was one horse between five ladies and a female attendant on an expedition which lasted two months, with only three days' rest during that time? Winefrid says they "performed it without stop or stay, but a day at Nancy to write letters, when she wrote to the Infanta, telling her that, God willing, on Christmas Eve she would be in Rome, one day at Milan to perform her devotions to St. Charles, a third at the Holy House at Loreto." From Brussels their route was first directed to Trèves, that Mary might comfort the members of the newly-founded house with a few last words. Their road then would have been through Lorraine to Nancy, from thence across the narrow part of Alsace to Bâle, and by Lucerne through the St. Gothard Pass to Lago Maggiore, Como, and Milan, from Milan by Piacenza, Bologna, and Ancona, to Loreto, after which they had to strike directly south, across Italy to Rome. The whole journey could have been little short of fifteen hundred miles, and in considering such a distance performed on foot in the space of two months, it would appear that the prayers of the travellers had been strikingly heard, and that they received singular assistance from Almighty God in supporting their bodily strength for such an undertaking.

The length of each day's march would have necessarily varied with finding the means of accommodation for the night, but must have averaged twenty miles more or less. We may indeed marvel how Mary herself with her weak and constantly failing

health could have supported such fatigue. Doubtless she was the last to mount the one sorry steed which was intended to help them all on their weary way. But her extraordinary energy never failed her where any enterprise had to be carried through, at whatever cost to herself, for God's glory. It enabled her habitually to ignore danger and endure labours and toils under which a feebler soul, though possessing far greater bodily strength, would have sunk. "She measured not her labours by her forces," says her friend, "but drew her forces to the necessities of her labours, were they spiritual or corporal, at home or in journeys, and had her spent body in such oblivion as made such as were her companions' recreation sometimes. In a journey once" (perhaps on this very journey to Rome) "after having gone thirty-five miles in one day, near being benighted, and in danger to find the gates shut, she would have undertaken to have hastened her pace and to have gone before to have kept the gates open."

It can scarcely be doubted that with such an example before them, Mary's companions fell but little short in the practice of virtues of a very high order, during an expedition, which in its very nature became an opportunity of testing the characters and attainments of those engaged in it. Accordingly a little sketch concerning one of them remains, which may be taken as a specimen of the four devoted souls who journeyed with Mary for two months on foot, with such unshaken fortitude and singleness of purpose, across the wild districts of Lower Germany and Switzerland, and through the rugged passes and

winter snows of the Alps, regardless of weather and of all the discomforts and perils to which travellers on the Continent at that period were exposed. Under the two last heads may be named, scarcely habitable inns, rough food, or the difficulty of getting any at all, and what were worse, but equally imminent, risks from robbers or undisciplined soldiery, and the insults and the persecutions to which Catholics were liable in countries where the new Protestant sects were in rebellion or had the upper hand.

This account which has come down to us is of Mary's sister, Barbara Ward, and is given by her fellow-traveller, Margaret Horde, in writing the history of her holy death to the communities in Flanders.¹

To begin with her pilgrimage to Rome. What shall I say of her recollection and strait union which we perceived to be between God and her soul? and this not only for a day, or some few times, but from the beginning of her journey even to the end thereof. And to the end she might perform this the better without any hindrance or molestation of others, she shunned all company so much as possible might be. Now saying her beads, then her Office, now examining, then making acts of contrition, now reading some spiritual lesson, then praising God by jaculatory prayers. Neither did this devotion and union with God hinder her charity towards her companions, but rather augment and increase the same. If we were weary, she was ready to animate us, if sickly willing to serve us, if dismayed she thought to comfort us, if melancholy she had ever some pretty jest, well-seasoned with virtue to recreate and make us merry.

¹ MS. xliii. 8, Bibl. Barberini, Rome.

Especially when we came to our inn, it was her custom to be exceeding pleasant, and after she had used her charity to all, she set herself with all care and diligence to help and recreate our Chief Superior whose health she tendered (*sic*) more than her own life, and would never be wanting in any occasion to serve and help her dearest Mother. Thus while she served others she neglected herself, and like a true scholar of such a master trampled all difficulties under her feet. Never was she heard in all her journey to complain of anything whatsoever, whether fair weather or foul, hot or cold, crosses or contents, sickness or health, plenty or want, lodging or none, still our champion remained the same, so commanding her own passions, as she never gave the least sign of dislike in word or countenance, though never so great occasions were offered unto her. In these and the like virtuous actions our pious pilgrim spent her time, conforming herself to all, that she might comfort and serve all.

It is not surprising, with Mary's tender devotion to our Blessed Lady, and the many and singular graces which she received from her, that she should have made a considerable divergence and added some two hundred and fifty miles to their lengthy journey by visiting the Holy House at Loreto. She went also especially to seek counsel and guidance from the Blessed Mother of God, in a spot so favoured by her through the many graces bestowed there, before engaging in the difficult business which had brought her so far. Mary spent a whole day in prayer at the Holy House. The Masses began at three o'clock in the morning to afford the largest opportunity possible to the numerous pilgrims. Doubtless, at the first and earliest said that morning in the holy chapel, our travellers were all to be seen on their knees

before the shrine. Mary knelt where thousands of holy souls, and among them no few saints, have knelt and obtained their petitions. She also asked in that sacred place, where our Blessed Lady had lived and worked under the eye of her Child, for direction and help from her to do the work which God had given her to do, and she received an answer such as His most chosen servants sometimes receive, a knowledge that she was to partake in a measure of the portion of His Blessed Mother on earth, and to suffer great things for His sake.

Of the day which Mary Ward passed thus in the holy chapel little is known. She never revealed the particulars to her companions, not even to her intimate friend Winefrid, as she had those of so many of the graces which God had given her. It does not appear to have been until a later time that her biographer learned the scanty information which she adds to the short account of the entire journey, saying that when Mary arrived at the Holy House, "with unspeakable devotion, faith, and confidence in God, she made her prayer, and took for her part and portion to labour and suffer for Christ, having lively represented to her the much she was to suffer." How this was shown to her we are not told, whether in detail or otherwise. But so effectually and clearly was it made known that her suffering should proceed from the Head of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff himself, that Winefrid continues: "Which was cause that as soon as she beheld the steeple of St. Peter's Church, sixteen miles off Rome, she knelt down and profoundly inclined, reverencing those sacred relics

of the Apostles, and rendered all submission to that Holy Seat and Chair of his successors." Thus did she give exterior evidence of her entire acceptance of the bitter chalice, as coming directly from our Lord by the hand of His Vicar and representative on earth.

"According as she designed, she arrived on Christmas Eve." The magnificent dome of the Basilica in which repose the remains of the Prince of the Apostles, and the outlines of the other sanctuaries of the ancient city, stood out well-defined and sharp against the clear evening sky of the south as they advanced. The streets were doubtless crowded with happy expectants of the joys of the morrow. Within, the churches, brilliant with light and ornaments, were full of devout worshippers, not only the warm-hearted Italians themselves, but pilgrims from all countries of the earth preparing for the solemn festival to begin that evening. Our travellers must all, even Mary herself, have been weary enough, but the latter had two special attractions that night before which fatigue vanished and other objects became for the moment indifferent. There were two powerful intercessors whose favour Mary had need of for the cause she was about to plead, and the light she had gained at Loreto was an additional spur to enlist them without delay as advocates. Her companions were of one heart with her in these aspirations. Not³ only therefore did she visit St. Peter's the same evening, before even going to her lodgings, and anxiously besought the help of the Prince of the

³ *Gottseliges Leben*, p. 153.

Apostles, but she also prayed at the tomb of St. Ignatius in the Gesù, seeking his assistance, as of one who had already aided her in her necessities. She spent two hours in prayer in both churches. Thus solemnly did she dedicate to the honour of God and of His servants their sojourn in this city of their desire.

Let us look once more for a moment at the little party of travellers as, their holy visits ended, they proceed to their resting place for the night. They had then reached Rome, the long-sought object of their weary journey, the goal of all their hopes, and to Mary's companions at least, in sanguine expectation, the fruitful source whence were to flow forth countless future blessings upon their beloved Institute. But to turn to the principal person of the group, what were the feelings of Mary herself? A very different prospect had, indeed, been presented interiorly before her. The cup of suffering had been placed before her eyes, and with the unselfishness which was so beautiful a part of her character, she would not make known to her friends what she dimly knew of the impending future. For why should she darken the joy which they must have felt in common with all devout souls who for the first time enter that city, so dear to every Catholic as the Source of Unity, the home of St. Peter, whose very dust it has been said contains the blood of martyrs? Mary, then, bore the burden alone, in silence, and even with joy, and set herself courageously to the task before her, commending herself as so often before, in childlike confidence to Him Who had so wonderfully guided her hitherto.

And here, in reaching the second part of Mary

Ward's Life, some querulous and faint-hearted souls may perhaps be inclined to ask, Why, if this work was of God, were these things permitted to fall out as they did? Why, when the path was open and the way easy to have obtained what she sought, and what she had so bravely laboured for, from Paul the Fifth, a Pontiff already her friend, was Mary yet allowed to put off her visit to Rome until he could help her no more? And why was she then brought there at all, to see but a sorrowful and suffering future before her, beyond which the bright distance yet in store for after years was hidden? The solution given to other similar questions concerning her, by one of her early German biographers in his somewhat peculiar manner, may not prove unacceptable as an answer to these difficulties.

It may perhaps be said, If Mary Ward had so many enlightenments from God, why did He not show her everything in detail? Why did He not so move the Father General and the whole Society that they should quickly be of the same mind with her? and why should so many and great difficulties remain in her way? Instead of attempting an explanation, we will in return reply : Say yourself, dear reader, why did God allow the infant Moses to be cast weeping into the river Nile, before he was laid in the royal cradle? Why had Joseph to go down into the deep pit, and into the cruel dungeon, before he ascended the throne? Why did the Angel drag away the Prophet Habacuc by the hair of his head, when it so hurts a man to have his hair pulled? Why did not the star guide the three Wise Men straight to Bethlehem, which would have spared the shedding of so much innocent blood? Why did not the Angel who appeared to St. Joseph in sleep come two months

sooner, by which the most holy parents of Jesus would have been saved one of their heaviest mental sufferings? Why did Almighty God allow such a strife and contrariety to arise between His beloved Apostles Peter and Paul concerning the keeping of the old laws and customs?

Do you give an answer to these, and a thousand such questions from Holy Scripture and the Lives of the Saints, and we shall soon understand these others also. So it is with God. He leads His own through darkness to light, through sorrow to joy, through ignominy to glory, through death to life; and it is indeed the true sign that God is the guide when any one goes on to what is good by hard, rough, and difficult ways. "This glory is to all His saints," that they do not buy cheap in this market. When, after years of strife and labour, the matter they had at heart is carried through, people begin to say to one another, "Why should such a noise have been made?" It was just because it was the good pleasure of God that it should be so. Therefore in the Apocalypse, Almighty God set His Throne close before the sea, and this sea was not soft and gentle, but hard, like glass and crystal; a clear sign that none are more pleasing to Him than those who break their way to Him, with the diamond of fortitude and courage, though vexatious opposition and contrarieties, like hard and sharp fragments of crystal and glass. This Mary Ward faithfully performed with a truly unconquerable perseverance; indeed, she made the hard glassy sea of difficulties which stood in her way, soft and flowing, by the great fire of her love to God and to her neighbour.

NOTES TO BOOK IV.

Note I.—*Recommendatory Letter from Bishop Blaise to the Prince-Bishop of Liege, concerning the English Virgins. Translated from the Latin (p. 397).*

Most Serene Prince,—English Virgins, distinguished for nobility and piety, who abide here with us, have begged of me to commend to your Serenity their Mother and Sisters who have lately journeyed hence to the city of Liege for the sake of better health; and this indeed I do most willingly, both on account of the singular example of piety and most religious behaviour by which they have bound to themselves the minds of our citizens in a wonderful way, and also because our Most Holy Lord, in consideration of their pious endeavours, has not long since commended them to me with most earnest words, and lastly, because I think I shall do a thing most pleasing to your Serenity, if you hear from me on this occasion what kind of guests you have in your city, and how worthy of the favour and patronage of your Serenity, especially if they betake themselves to teaching others. And this, indeed, it is my intention here to promote, that the fruit may pass to the nobles of our country, and so the good work may be more acceptable to the Divine Majesty, in that it furthers the advantage and salvation of a greater number. If your Serenity were dwelling in Liege, I should think this commendation unnecessary. For the modesty, gravity, and religion of these Virgins themselves, and chiefly of Mrs. Mary, who presides over the rest, would commend them to your Benignity without other testimony, but it will suffice to have intimated these things in few words, that I may satisfy a duty of charity and my devotion to your Serenity, who may Almighty God long preserve safe for the Christian State.

Your Serenity's most devoted Servant,

F. JACOB, Bishop of St. Omer.

St. Omer, February 2, 1617.

Note II.—*Pastoral Letter of Bishop Blaise, in favour of the English Virgins. Translated from the Latin (p. 404).*

Jacob Blaise, by the favour of God and the Apostolic See, Bishop of St. Omer, to all the faithful of Christ who shall see the presents, health in the Lord.

Since the mode of living of the noble Virgins of England, dwelling together in this city, in promoting their own salvation and perfection, and that of other females, which here with praise they are doing, has so much pleased His Holiness, and the Sacred Congregation of Cardinals, Interpreters of the Council of Trent, that the Most Holy Lord Pope, with the said Cardinals, has not only willed that they should be especially recommended to us, but has also prescribed that the peculiar care and protection of them should be undertaken by us, and have commanded us to help them with all the assistance we can, where need shall be, that in their so laudable Institute, furthered by the Divine aid, they may daily produce abundant fruit, to which end also His Holiness has granted to them peculiar Indulgences out of the treasures of the Church. We, in order that we may be obedient to the Divine Goodness, and the will and commands of our Most Holy Lord and the Sacred Congregation, and show to the said pious Virgins what favour we can, testify by the presents that we, not only by our own will (as even from the beginning until now), but now also by command of the Apostolic See, take them into our protection, and that they shall have all our aid in all things as often as they shall ask or need it, as the Holy Lord by the Sacred Congregation has enjoined, that whilst it shall be deliberated in the usual manner about the confirmation of this their Institute by the Apostolic See (which is promised to us in the said letters from the city), these pious Virgins themselves and all others may know that they enjoy the same favours, privileges, and protection from the Holy See as rising Religious Orders before their confirmation are wont to enjoy, and that they who shall devote themselves and their assistance to promoting this most useful Institute (which is recommended to us in the said letters, and for our part we shall afford) will do a thing most pleasing to the Sacred Congregation and so to our Most Holy Lord, and

will have Christ the Lord, Whose interest here is concerned a perpetual rewarder of their piety.

Given and done at St. Omer in our Episcopal Palace, etc., in the year of our Lord 1617, the 10th day of the month of February.

Note III.—*Father Domenico di Gesù Maria, the Discalced Carmelite* (p. 480).

Father Domenico di Gesù Maria was born in Spain in 1559. St. Teresa appeared to him after her death and cured him of the plague, telling him he would one day advance her canonization. God bestowed upon Father Domenico in a marvellous degree the gift of miracles, which equalled those performed by some of the greatest saints, and though his life was in consequence one of constant intercourse with the outer world, he had as wonderful a gift of prayer and contemplation, in which he was continually wrapt in ecstasy, and received remarkable revelations concerning future events. In one of these he predicted the future disastrous fate of the Spanish Armada, while yet the early preparations were being made to fit it out. After living this supernatural life in Spain for forty-five years, he was sent for to Italy by the Pope, and in 1604 to Rome. In 1620 Paul V. commissioned him to aid Duke Maximilian I. of Bavaria and the Emperor Ferdinand, in their struggle with the heretics in the earlier part of the Thirty Years' War. Almighty God revealed to Father Domenico many times the particulars of the celebrated victory of Prague and the part he should take in it. Having joined the Duke he solemnly blessed the standards of the two armies, both having the figure of our Lady on them, the Bavarian with the two Holy Names on the reverse, and *Da mihi virtutem*, &c., the Austrian, our Lord on the Cross, with *Exurge Domine*, &c., and on the reverse, *Monstra te esse Matrem*. *Sancta Maria* was the battle-cry. Both armies, with their generals, received the Carmelite scapular at the holy man's hands, Duke Maximilian being the first to present himself for it. Finding a small chalk picture of the Holy Family in a castle sacked by the enemy near Pilsen, in which the eyes of our Lady and St. Joseph had been pierced through as a mark of scorn, he took a vow to make reparation

for the profanity by procuring all the honour to it in his power. He hung it round his neck, and with his crucifix, through which he had worked so many miracles, in his hand, mounted on horseback, he accompanied the Duke and the Generals Tilly and Spinola into the thick of the battle, in the attack on the White Mountain of Prague, encouraging the soldiers with his voice, and by his prayers and tears which he poured forth to God. The soldiers were half starved from want of provisions, and had to charge up a steep ascent against the well entrenched enemy, but, animated by the holy servant of God, their prowess forced the rebels to give way. The battle lasted only three hours. The rout was complete, and the Palatine, with his family, had to fly in haste from Prague, totally abandoning his newly assumed dominions. His general, bringing the news to the Count, said : "Fly, Sire, your army is defeated ; the magician"—so the heretics reputed Father Domenico—"has bewitched every one."

NOTE IV.—*On the Portraits in this Volume.*

The engravings which illustrate the present volume, and which were executed by a skilful artist in Munich, are both taken from the original paintings which have been preserved by the nuns of the Institute ever since the lifetime of Mary Ward. The original of the frontispiece is in the convent at Augsburg, and was, as far as tradition goes, brought there by Mary Poyntz, the foundress of that house, in 1662. The picture has remained there ever since, as the nuns still inhabit the same buildings which she purchased and occupied, having been so happy as to escape ejection at the secularisation. The portrait is painted in oils in what is called life-size, and is in excellent preservation. It has been pronounced by the best artists in Munich to be a fine specimen of the Flemish school of the early part of the seventeenth century. Mary Ward is here represented in the dress adopted by herself and her companions at St. Omer some period after 1609, and henceforth worn by them until the year 1631. The plain, plaited black dress, stiff collar and small white band round the neck, the binders over the forehead, with the tightly fitting white cap and transparent black veil thrown over the head, give a religious aspect to the

attire, and were evidently chosen to avoid approximation to the habit of any existing enclosed Order, and thus mark the different vocation of the wearers. It may perhaps be added that a long black silk veil, which fell over them from head to foot, was added when they left the home for out of doors duties. The exact date of the portrait is unknown, but is considered by those who are judges to be about the year 1621. We may admire the fine intellectual cast of features, noble bearing, firmness and sweetness of disposition, and elevated character of mind which this portrait reveals to us, yet we learn from one, who knew the living countenance well, that there was in it, "I know not what of excellent mixture that no painter (though very excellent in his art), could express or describe, the two times that she (Mary) yielded to the exceeding importunity of most deserving friends."¹

The remarkable history of the second illustration is given in full in the body of the work, in connection with that of Mary Poyntz, the lady whom it portrays. Notwithstanding its small size, which does not exceed that of the engraving itself, this portrait is also in oils, and painted in a most delicate and finished style. How vivid is the representation may be judged by the effect which the sight of the two contrasted sides of the beautiful countenance had upon the mind of the gentleman for whom it was executed. This painting also has never left the hands of the nuns of the Institute, and is now at the convent at Nymphenburg, already mentioned.²

¹ Winefrid Wigmore's manuscript.

² See pp. 240, 241.

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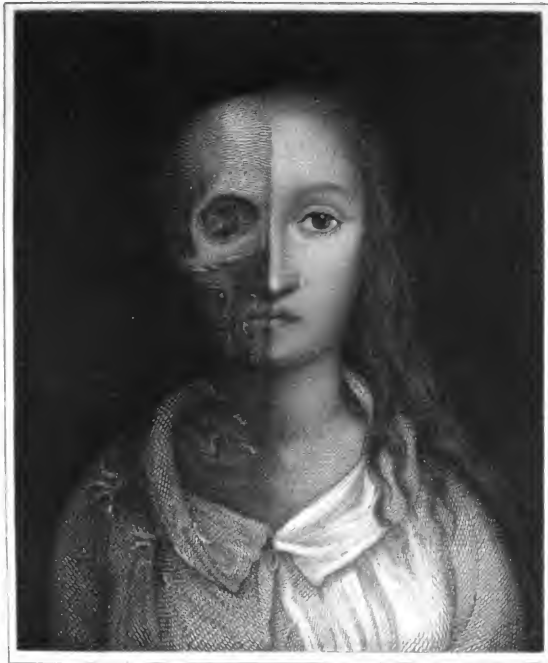
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